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ABSTRACT

This document contains a synthesis of the debate on the significant developments since 1986 and on the future agenda for literacy education, held at a seminar attended by 40 participants from 21 countries. The synthesis summarizes workshops on models of literacy practice, national policies, development of partnerships, evaluation, and research, citing achievements and limitations in each area. An agenda for the future is proposed. The following seminar papers are included: "Literacy in the USA: The Present Issues" (Hanna Arlene Fingeret); "Functional Illiteracy in Latin America" (Isabel Infante R.); and "Sociocultural Dimensions of Literacy: Literacy in an International Context" (Brian Street). An appendix contains country reports from the following: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, the Commonwealth of Independent States, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia/Slovak Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Korea, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as from the European Community and UNESCO. A list of participants' addresses is also included. (KC)

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THE FUTURE OF LITERACY AND THE LITERACY OF THE FUTURE

Report of the Seminar on Adult Literacy in Industrialized Countries

UIE, Hamburg, 4 - 7 December 1991

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PREFACE

Six years after the first UNESCO international meeting held in Hamburg on adult literacy in industrialized countries, a second seminar was called to assess the developments that have taken place since 1985 and to set an agenda for action and research, as well as for international co-operation.

This seminar on *The Future of Literacy and the Literacy of the Future*, held in Hamburg at the end of 1991, was attended by 40 participants from 21 countries, and representatives from the Commission of the European Communities, non-governmental organisations and research centers.

Each one was asked to prepare beforehand a report assessing the progress achieved during recent years in his or her country: recognition of the problem of adult illiteracy, introduction of policies and legislation, involvement of the different sectors, research and development, implementation of programs and publications. These reports, a synthesis of which is included in the present publication, contain also an assessment of the key issues that have been raised during recent years in each country and the participant's view regarding the "agenda for the future" in his or her region: need for public information, modification of policies and of programs, priorities for research, networking and international cooperation.

The present publication contains a synthesis of the debate both on the significant developments since 1986 and on the future agenda. It is in this section that the reader will find the recommendations adopted at the end of this seminar.

I should draw attention to the Hamburg Declaration adopted by the participants. In that statement, one can observe the shifts in the meanings of literacy that have taken place over recent years as well as the questions raised by these different "literacies" that have emerged in various social contexts.

In order to develop a prospective analysis, three researchers were asked to present their own vision of the present issues and of the shifts in the meanings of literacy in the industrialized areas of the world, both in the North and in the South. I need to thank Hanna Arlene Fingeret from USA, Brian Street from the United Kingdom and Isabel Infante R. from Chile for having taken the time to rewrite their paper for the present publication.

This account of the seminar, published within the series *UIE Reports*, has been prepared by Christiana Winter. Wilma Gramkow has been responsible for the final lay-out of the publication.

Paul Bélanger
Director of UIE

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1986

- Summary of the Workshops -

Introduction

Before the seminar, the participants were asked to prepare a country report for the Unesco Institute for Education (UIE) following a questionnaire-guide on adult literacy, which was sent to them by UIE.

They were asked to briefly describe the situation of adult literacy in their countries since 1986.

The reports mentioned the level of recognition of the problem of adult literacy in the different countries, the significant developments since 1986 - main trends in the development of provision of adult literacy programmes, international cooperation, the existence of research teams or centers, etc.

The participants presented the main issues during recent years in their countries such as: awareness raising, literacy and cultural policies, the specific learning conditions in adult literacy courses, second language literacy, literacy and schooling, the quality of literacy programmes.

An agenda for the future was presented: what are the actions which are going to be taken concerning public information, modification of policies etc.; what is planned in the area of research: what are the main research priorities, which are the less investigated areas, etc.; what is planned in the area of networking: the national and international level, does an exchange between networks already exist or has an exchange been planned?

The country reports are presented in the appendix. Unfortunately, the report of Israel is missing.

During the seminar three workshops were formed where the developments since 1986 as well as the main issues concerning adult literacy in general were discussed.

A brief summary of the discussions in the workshops follows:

1. Models of literacy practice

Although there seems to be general recognition of the varieties of literacy, it should be noted that this has occurred for various reasons: in some countries, the obvious size and complexity of society have worked against standardization; in others, the fragmented approach to literacy provision has led to diversity.

The main trends observed in most countries since 1986 were the following:

Achievements

- Recognition of literacy as a right for all and consequently legislation to implement this right (see national policies).

- Increased provision in the area of literacy in many countries, such as in Germany (growing number of participants in literacy programmes from 5,700 in 1985 to 20,000 in 1991, and growing number of institutions offering literacy programmes

from 280 in 1985 to 400 in 1991); in Ireland (steady increase in the Adult Literacy and Community Education Budget and recommendations to increase literacy provision nationally in the Programme for Social and Economic Progress - PESP); in the UK (development of Open Learning Centres since 1988).

- Models of literacy are being activated and developed less by literacy theoreticians and practitioners and more by those with specific interests.

- A strong movement in literacy with the participation of the people involved and changes in literacy practices: not remediation, but change in language (plain language), social and human rights, etc.

- Well organized NGOs, such as "Lire et Ecrire" in Belgium, GPLI in France, RaPaL and ALBSU in the United Kingdom.

- Acceptance of literacy as an expression and an instrument of social and cultural pluralism.

- A new trend in pedagogy and literacy education organization: a voice for the people, participation of students at each level of work, student-created material, self-education and self-evaluation, a dialogue for literacy instead of banking and top-down pedagogy.

Limitations

- Even with varieties and diversities, there is a shift away from humanistic/ empowering/critical models to models driven by economic development needs, short-term desires and reduction of literacy to "skills acquisition".

- Literacy as a right tends to become literacy as a need, and, slowly, literacy as an obligation for the most dependent groups of society.

- For most of the programmes, funds are given only on a short-term basis. There is no long-term funding coming from the State.

- Mobilizations, campaigns and legislation for mass literacy education have had the negative effect, denounced by many literacy organizations now, of creating and stigmatizing a large underclass identified as illiterate, or better "groups at risk". Over ten years these groups have grown from 5% to 30% or even 40% of the adult population.

2. National Policies

In general we can say that three kinds of policies should be distinguished:

- literacy prevention for young adolescents
- adult literacy
- general promotion of literacy

Achievements

- Well-organized programmes with a more competent staff.

- Greater policy clarity.
  Adoption of new legislation on adult literacy: the United Kingdom "Further and Higher Education Bill" of 1991 contains elements that will guarantee funding for adult basic skills work; in Poland the 1991 law on education confirms the right of every citizen to education and the right to complete their general education; in Sweden the New Education Act of 1991 guarantees that all adults receive education corresponding to nine years' formal schooling through the curriculum of the Adult Basic Education System; in Korea the Social Education Promotion Law of 1987 (Adult Education Act), was the first legislation on adult education and functional literacy; in Germany recommendations were made by the Parliament in 1990 to take measures against illiteracy.

- More cooperation between government and NGOs: in Ireland, for example, the Department of Education has established a Consultative Group on Adult Education and Training. Participants in this group include representatives from the NGOs, statutory bodies, Trade Unions and Government Departments.

- Second and third language literacy developed because the growing migrant and immigrant populations have broadened the frameworks of literacy.

- Massive literacy campaigns have shown a solidarity between the people who were engaged in them, as well as a recognition of basic literacy as a right for all.

- The ILY has had an extremely positive impact on policy formation and has had an advocacy role. In most of the countries the government, through the ILY, has been encouraged to be more systematic in its approach to adult literacy provision, especially in curriculum and teacher-related matters.

Limitations

- Too often policies and laws are unfunded.

- There has been a marginalization, exclusion or absorption of community-based organizations.

- In Central and Eastern Europe the recent destructuration of society has had a very negative effect on social movements, which took most of the initiatives in adult education and community action.
  These movements (youth, women's, cultural etc.), have vanished. They were the basis for alternatives to State-run adult education.
  Current adult education programmes do not provide basic education or literacy. They promote certification. They do not reach villages and do not fit into other cultures, such as that of the Gypsies.

- There is no overall guarantee that policies are solid and likely to survive; literacy commitments are very fragile and susceptible to a sudden decline.

- A genuine lifelong learning society cannot yet be identified.

- In a nation with a democratic society, it is questionable whether there is a place for a plurality of literacies and plurality of literacy education, provided by all kinds of institutions and groups.

3. Development of Partnerships

There is abundant evidence that new partnerships have considerable potential to raise awareness, increase diversity, mobilize resources and stimulate national and international networking.

Achievements

- There is good evidence of new partners such as enterprises, large corporations, trade unions, publishers, media. These new partners are particularly appealing for community-based organizations, which have less support from the State and public organizations and have to compete with public programmes.

- There is good evidence of better networking in some countries, e.g. France.

Limitations

- Some new partners in literacy are inexperienced and bring to literacy narrow and inappropriate criteria.

- Working conditions of literacy practitioners (salaries, job security, professionalization) are not necessarily improved by an increased number of actors and partnerships, often they are reduced.

- Literacy is linked with education in the narrow sense. There is no, or almost no link between literacy and general adult education or general education for young people.

4. Evaluation

The explosion of interest in literacy, especially at the political and policy level, is certain to result in calls - very soon - for greater accountability, precise results and benefits from programmes, and evidence of economic and social progress from literacy. There are two major areas of evaluation: evaluation of learners' progress with their literacy achievements and evaluation of programmes and policy strategies.

Achievements

- Emergence of alternative models of evaluation with a more qualitative nature, e.g. diagnostic evaluation centred on the general and learning needs of the learners.

- Increased interest can be found in using formative evaluation as a test for greater teaching and learning effectiveness.

- In fields other than literacy, there is emerging a rich set of evaluation approaches and techniques, which have good potential relevance for literacy evaluation.

Limitations

- Diversities of literacy imply diversities of evaluation.

- An unnecessary tension persists between qualitative and quantitative evaluation procedures.

- The quantitative evaluation is often non-significant because of the poor information received concerning enrolments and number of class hours.

- There are also doubts on the validity of the linguistic tests.

- More funds are needed.

5. **Research**

The most important trend regarding research is the trend towards policy-oriented research. Governments, in particular, wish to determine the extent, character and even the findings of research. At the same time, there is heightened awareness that good literacy practice requires good research.

Achievements

- Re-orientation of research:

    - more research in support of practice,
    - emergence of a kind of research which is more qualitative than quantitative,
    - experimentation with participatory research practices, giving a role to the learners and literacy workers.

- Better awareness that literacy theory, policy and practice are linked.

- Potential for greater contact between researchers and better dissemination of findings.

Limitations

- Resistance coming from:
  - the scientific research environment,
  - the funding organizations.
- In quantitative research there is a need for relevant measures, appropriate statistical tools and research without prejudices.
- The opposition between qualitative and quantitative methodologies has to change from simplistic and popular dichotomies to more co-operative partnerships.
- More research on appropriate evaluation is needed.
- More long-term studies are needed, driven less by short-term politics.
- There is a need for more research on equity, justice and cultural aspects.
- Increased commitment to networking and international collaboration and exchange is needed.

FUTURE AGENDA AND RECOMMENDATIONS

National Policies

1. Any literacy project must ensure access to all sections of the population - with a particular focus on minority groups. Extension of literacy provision is linked to a society's development towards greater social equity. Instead of reducing the question of literacy to an issue related to education and employment only, promotion of basic education should be considered an essential part of cultural policy.

2. Multi-lingual policies should also take into account multi-literacy politics. Any literacy provision should promote the particular linguistic, cultural and social concerns of the learning group.

3. The development of literacy policy is an ongoing concern; policy can be evaluated by the way in which it has evolved. Literacy policies should be formulated in close collaboration with learners, literacy workers and all those participating in the literacy process.

4. In all countries, the contradiction between the importance of the promotion of literacy and literacy education as expressed by the respective public bodies and the limited budgets allocated for adult education programmes is still prevailing. There is a necessity to make funding available so that policies can be implemented on a long-term basis.

5. Developments to improve the quality of present literacy provision are linked to increased recognition of the need to improve the status and working conditions of literacy practitioners.

6. As a means to working towards a learning society the development of literacy policies should include the following three components: strategies for the prevention of illiteracy, provision of adequate literacy education programmes, and the general promotion of literacy for all sectors of the population. Adult literacy provision has to be linked to other activities in continuing adult education and training opportunities.

7. Continued developments to improve the general public's understanding of the nature of the literacy issue are needed, e.g. sensitization of the public towards the problems experienced by adults with reading and writing difficulties.

Partnership

1. Education policies should be oriented towards increasing the number of different social and cultural actors to collaborate in literacy provision, e.g. representatives of the groups concerned (potential learners), literacy practitioners, schools, employers, social and cultural organizations, libraries, publishers.

2. Critical reflection on the aims of partnerships in drawing up the conditions of such relationships is necessary. What are the possible gains and losses for literacy practitioners in these partnerships?

3. If the trend towards more pluralistic literacies and literacy models is to be maintained, there is a need to preserve community-based and grassroot initiatives for literacy against the increasing influence of public authorities and private bodies in literacy provision.

4. The relationship between the State and non-governmental literacy services is changing: there is a need to negotiate a new relationship with the State so that access to resources does not erode the ethos and identity of literacy practice.

5. Libraries, publishers and the printed media should be invited to produce and disseminate written materials accessible and of interest to a wide public (e.g. promotion of plain language). In particular, texts produced by literacy students should be published.

6. There is a need to explore and develop ways of using the mass media to tackle the stigma of literacy and reach those people who would like to get help with reading and writing. Such ways of creating new learning opportunities might be learner-centred newspapers or distance learning programmes.

7. Critical reflection on the benefits of literacy in the workplace should question the relationship between education and economic productivity and, in a more general sense, whose interests are served.

8. International cooperation and collaboration between East and West and between North and South should be increased.

Practical Models

1. High-quality literacy practice needs to be consolidated on the ground, while the experiences acquired should be systematized and used as a basis for the development of new programmes. This information should be disseminated nationally and internationally.

2. The current trend towards diversification, whereby the learner and his culture are central to the development of all literacy practice and learner-produced materials are actively promoted, needs reinforcement.

3. The quality of initial and in-service training of literacy tutors should be further improved within the context of the literacy provision.

Evaluation and Research

Evaluation

1. Increased concern for appropriate forms of evaluation of literacy work can be expected from:

   - students who want to measure their progress
   - tutors who are concerned with the effectiveness of their teaching
   - policy-makers and organisers who want to measure the overall effectiveness of their programmes
   - funding bodies who want to assess the value of the investment they are putting into literacy provision.

2. There is a need to clarify the indicators which measure the impact of literacy not only in terms of improving the individual's skills but also through changes in the social environment and the economic situation of the learner and his or her community.

3. Evaluation should be carried out in consultation with the student and aim to improve learning and teaching effectiveness.

4. Diversity of literacy practices requires research into a wider range of evaluation techniques.

Research

1. More varied methods of carrying out literacy research should be explored. These must be appropriate to the aims of the different studies, e.g. participatory research, multi-disciplinary approaches and quantitative methods.

2. A better balance should be achieved between policy-driven and practice-driven research, with adequate funding for long term-studies.

3. Regional and international exchange of information should be encouraged through increased dissemination of research findings, e.g. via research networks.

4. More international collaboration in research projects is needed for the purpose of creating comparative studies.

5. National surveys on literacy have to be conducted in those countries where public recognition of the magnitude of the problem is still minimal. These surveys should allow measurement of different levels of literacy skills.

6. Research is needed into the changes in meaning and uses of literacy as a consequence of the development of new technologies.

7. Research should be carried out into student learning and corresponding teaching methods.

8. Research is needed on language and literacy practices in different communities and social groups as well as in specific political contexts (literacy in rural areas, vernacular literacies, literacy of young people, literacy practices developed under dictatorships).

9. There is a continued need to investigate the different reasons why a significant number of people reach adulthood without an adequate grasp of reading and writing.

DECLARATION

Introduction

1. In recent years major changes in attitudes towards literacy have taken place in both developing and industrialized countries.

   - We are concerned with the promotion of literacy rather than the elimination of a problem.

   - Literacy acquisition is a lifelong issue which changes with age and social context.

   - Above all, literacy acquisition is a social responsibility, not an individual problem.

   - No country or region has the monopoly on experience and expertise in the provision of literacy as a basic human right for all.

Shifts in the social contexts and meanings of literacy

2. Encouraging adults to develop literacy skills reflects new social conditions. We must not understand literacy as an indicator of past failures, but as evidence that people are continuously constructing their own futures.

3. There are many literacies, reflecting adults' and communities' broad range of linguistic, cultural, ethnic, geographical and social backgrounds and situations.

4. There is also a diversity of literacy education models: economic, political and humanistic models associated with formal and informal education systems, models integrating partnership with other agencies, etc. The validity of each model depends on the practices and the specific conditions which address students' and communities' needs.

Towards a learning society

5. Learning is the key resource for social change in modern society. The increasing complexity and the crucial role of the information processes of all kinds create new and unlimited demands on people's and communities' learning. Learning processes are central to all kinds of activities which people engage in to improve their quality of life.

6. Literacy workers experience that in fact there are no limits to the learning capacities of adults. Present research has moved from the former assumption about learning difficulties towards the study of the cultural richness of adults.

This means that literacy education is to be understood not as a remedial action, but rather as an advancement of the diversity of the competencies which people have.

Policies

7. The crucial and initial phase for the development of policies still remains the raising of public awareness together with high-level national commitment. Publicity and awareness-raising must be an on-going process to support the development of policies. During this phase it is important that literacy issues are not confined to individual deficiencies or crude statistical analysis of the scale of need. The experiences of literacy workers tell us that there is need for an integration of quantitative measures and qualitative approaches if the genuine realities of the people involved are to be appreciated.

8. In many countries literacy education provision is subject to short-term funding, which leads to lack of planning, job insecurity and high turnover of experienced practitioners. Policies should be developed which confront these issues and allow planning and human resource management to take place.

9. In order to establish a genuine learning society, literacy policies have to take into account the various learning environments, processes and activities in which people engage. Public policies based on comprehensive premises should lead to the development of positive and robust structures.

10. In all countries we have seen a diversification of actors, involving governmental and non-governmental organizations. We are living in a period of transition from centralized (welfare) states to a new system of complementary roles. National governments, regional and local authorities, public institutions, business, trade unions, women's groups and community-based organizations are the partners in realizing the right of access to learning opportunities. New relationships between the State, the economy and the autonomous organizations in civil society have to be developed.

Papers

Presented at the Seminar

LITERACY IN THE USA: THE PRESENT ISSUES

by Hanna Arlene Fingeret
Durham, NC, USA

It is a privilege to speak with you today. I'm going to talk briefly about my background and about how literacy education is organized in the United States to help you understand my perspective. Then I have been asked to address research, policy and practice in the United States; I have found it most useful to incorporate those concerns into a discussion of major issues. I hope this analysis has some relevance for those of you working in places that differ greatly from the US.

Introduction

At 19, in 1969, when I was an undergraduate college student, I was searching for something to be involved in that had some social meaning; I signed up to be a teaching assistant at the local, inner-city, predominantly black, vocational-technical high school in Cambridge, Mass. I worked in the print shop two periods a day with Mr. Tierney. He had 10th and 11th graders who did not know how to read and write. He wanted to use print shops to motivate them - he thought they would be proud to see their own writing in print, in a book produced by the shop. I was frustrated with the public school setting, so after a year, I became involved in a community-based education program in Cambridge, Mass. - an NGO.

Over time, the students' parents began calling me and asking for help. I knew these adults who had asked for help. I had been to their neighborhoods, their homes. I knew their children. I knew some of their pain and struggles. I knew of their poverty, their battles with the Housing Authority, the rats in their children's beds at night, their fears that they would de dislocated at any time by the powerful universities, the City Council, the inner conflicts of their own environment. So I began adult literacy work by teaching a group of women in a housing development how to write letters to government officials to complain about their housing. And how to research on the housing laws. It was not teaching them to recite the letters of the alphabet, but by the time they finished their correspondence with the City every one of these women knew the letters of the alphabet and much, much more. They understood how those letters, when combined in certain ways, could be tools for changing the circumstances of their lives.

From this background, there never was any question as to whether literacy education is political activity; it never was an intellectual debate for me, or an abstract notion. My knowledge was generated by my concrete experience; I was privileged to be part of the process through which these women and other adults came to know and use their power.

After working for about nine years, I felt stuck; I had lost that sense of wonder that comes when the world is transformed in the process of learning and teaching. I could not move beyond an individual focus to work with *communities* and literacy. I knew I needed new questions. I returned to graduate school.

As a literacy worker, I had had little use for the universities that surrounded me in Boston, Massachusetts. When I was invited to graduate classes to talk about

community literacy work, my words were translated into an abstract language that was far from my experience. When I returned to school, I suddenly felt as if I had been stripped of my identity, displaced from my culture, and separated from my experience; I struggled to hold on to my sense of myself as someone who *knows* some things. I had the good fortune to study with some social and moral philosophers, political scientists, historians, anthropologists and adult educators who tried to support my struggle to believe in my knowledge.

As I read more and more in adult literacy education, I was faced with a dilemma: the descriptions in books of the characteristics of non-reading adults appeared to be based on and promoting a negative stereotype that ignored the skill, dignity, strength, courage, dedication, and love that I had experienced among the adults with whom I had been working. In the universities I found some of the language and questions I had been groping for, and some of the skills I needed to complement my intuition. I discovered a larger community of thinkers and literacy workers who shared my concern and helped me ask better questions. But as I moved from being a graduate student to being a professor, I continued experiencing the culture of the university as disrespectful to the dignity of non-reading adults and the experience of literacy workers. I decided that my research had to provide opportunities for non-reading adults to tell *their* side of the story and that is what I have tried to do, through participatory research and programme evaluation.

Now I am working with a group of people in an NGO called Literacy South. We work with literacy workers and learners and with community organizations. Part of our mission statement reads: "We work to support those people and organizations in the South who are committed to a shared discovery of literacy as a tool for achieving democratic communities and personal growth. Through a process of training, consultation, research, organizing, advocacy, and publication, we help learners and teachers realize their own power and the power they have to change the world around them."

Literacy education in the United States is primarily provided through federally-funded programs and volunteers; only a very small fraction of programs are grassroots organizations, based in the local community. Most teachers are part-time, with no job security or ability to do long-range planning. The rest are volunteers. The people who need to develop their literacy skills are mostly found in areas that are very poor; they are predominantly people of color and immigrants, people who have often not had access to quality schools, or have not been able to attend school, because they have had to support their families from a young age. They often live in substandard housing - in the United States there are homes in which there is no indoor plumbing or electricity. So it is important to realize that literacy work in the United States is primarily funded by the government, even though that government has clearly not been able or willing to respond to any of the other pressing needs felt by this population. There are minimal resources for grassroots alternatives to the mainstream programs.

Issues

My personal journey from practitioner to advocate and participant in a community working for enhanced citizen participation in democratic communities has been

instructive. From this vantage point, I think there are six inter-related issues facing literacy work, research and policy in the United States right now:

1. There are many exiting, innovative and important new literacy projects in the US these days. The lessons learned from these projects remain mostly unexamined, however, and the development of a larger organizing strategy in which all of these projects play a part remains the greatest challenge we face.

2. There are a number of leaders in the field, but their positions are extremely fragile and their work is hindered by reliance on a traditional notion of leadership.

3. Participatory research is developing a proud tradition in many nations in the world; in the United States, however, it is still barely acknowledged.

4. The labels for literacy practice continue to change - now we talk about family literacy, workplace literacy, and learner involvement - and there is a slowly growing understanding of the importance of meaningful content in literacy instruction. But the experience for the majority of learners remains largely *un*changed, committed to a notion of literacy as autonomous, non-political and separate from social issues such as racism, sexism, class inequality, and poverty.

5. There is a continuing naive faith in the power of information to transform political structures.

6. The central policy question has to shift from "How many" to "How does change happen?"

Discussion

I'd like to explain each of these briefly.

1. There are many exciting, innovative and important new literacy projects in the US these days. For example, at Literacy South, Jereann King is working with grassroots community development organizations such as the Wilson Community Improvement Association, and with community organizers such as the Piedmont Peace Project to learn how to integrate literacy and community action. In Knoxville, Tennessee, Juliet Merrifield and Connie White at the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee are working with a grassroots community development organization, the Lonsdale Improvement Organization, integrating literacy instruction with oral history to develop a community history designed to create community pride and develop leadership. In Philadelphia, Susan Lytle is conducting a teacher research project through the National Center for Adult Literacy, in which literacy teachers move into a new relationship to their own knowledge and that of their students. At the University of Massachusetts in Boston, Elsa Auerbach is helping community residents who are enrolled in college develop skills that support the students' involvement in the

development of their own communities, paying particular attention to the issues of linguistic minority groups. Jean Hammink, Jacque Cook, and the other board members and members of the Literacy Network, a national organization, have tried to find ways to involve local literacy teachers and students in national policy debates. Sondra Stein, in Massachusetts, developed worker-centered workplace literacy programmes with state support. The Association for Community Based Education, another national organization, is trying to help community organizations figure out how to address the community's economic and social issues raised by their literacy work. And Jearlean Osborne and Carol Burnett in Biloxi, Mississippi, are working with the community to transform a traditional individually-oriented tutoring program into a force for community change and development.

And the list goes on. A multitude of exciting projects has developed over the last five years. We all have learned a lot, but we don't know what we've learned, or how to build on each other's efforts. The development of a larger organizing strategy in which these projects play a part remains the greatest challenge we face.

2. There are a number of leaders emerging in the field. They include persons such as Samuel Santiago, Marty Finsterbusch and Sonya Linton who are organizing students; groups of practitioners such as the United Literacy Workers of New York City who are organizing themselves with the support of Mae Dick, a literacy advocate working for the city; and literacy workers such as Annette Laico, Beth Broadway and Phil Rose, who are trying to channel resources from mainstream organizations to support emerging student organizing efforts. We are in danger of losing the developing cadre of organizers and leaders, however, because of the difficulty of funding organizing efforts and funding grassroots literacy work, in general.

Their positions are extremely fragile and their work is hindered by reliance on a traditional notion of leadership, in which the leader is the person with vision who mobilizes others around that vision. This notion of leadership is oriented to individual charisma and organizational hierarchies of the dominant culture; it needs to be replaced by a broader commitment to collective action. For example, if a system of new reader advocates is developed in a literacy program, it usually is fitted into the existing power structure. A student who has a problem in the program may appeal to his or her advocate who, in turn, will feel responsible for solving the problem by going to the appropriate authority figure - the teacher or program administrator. The advocate is not usually taught to help the student turn to other students to explore whether their problem is shared by others in the classroom and, if so, to develop a collective strategy for responding.

This mirrors the prevailing power relationships in the classroom, but it is done in the name of student empowerment; a fundamental socialization process is labelled as a change process. Of course, it has the *potential* for real change when learners begin to work collectively with other students, partly as a result of their enhanced sense of their own power. Even then, however, all too often the leader feels responsible for figuring out the situation and then mobilizing the group. The alternative to the traditional notion of leadership is based in collective

rather than individual *conceptualization* of the issue, not just collective *action* around a concept developed by the leader.

3. In research, as in policy and practice, the time has come to involve learners and literacy workers as partners; participatory research is developing a proud tradition in many nations in the world, but in the United States it is a fledgling, barely acknowledged. The most natural focus for participatory research is on the development of participatory practice; we know very little about what works, how it works, or how it comes about. Moving teachers and administrators into roles as research partners is as important as involving students. And the research agenda should not focus solely on literacy; we have to look at successful social movements broadly as well as at struggles for social and political change in other nations.

   Critical analysis feels stalled to me. Only a very small number of researchers and theorists have been able to move beyond the rhetoric to exploring the nature of domination as it is *experienced* by learners in workplace literacy programs, for example, or by parents in ESL family literacy programs. And concrete examinations of the political struggles that ensue in the US when literacy work is truly liberating are almost nonexistent. Furthermore, the process of moving from individual to collective action, and the role that literacy programs can play in facilitating that process, are poorly understood and minimally explored.

4. So the labels for literacy practice continue to change - now we talk about family literacy, workplace literacy, and learner involvement - and there is a slowly growing understanding of the importance of respecting adults' experience and culture in literacy instruction, but the experience for the majority of learners remains largely *un*changed. It is primarily based on the traditional school-based model of experts who know and students who don't know, and on what Brian Street (1987) calls the autonomous model of literacy, in which literacy skills are viewed as separable from the learner and the situation. Economic rationales continue to legitimate literacy work; this can be seen in the movement toward an industrial model of literacy programs in which efficiency and cost-benefit ratios are paramount, and computers are viewed as the potential panacea.

   There is an increasing number of literacy educators in the US who are interested in participatory practice; however, we need to develop mechanisms to help literacy workers move through the difficult time of changing role definitions and power relationships. As I travel around the country, literacy teachers talk to me about feeling ashamed as their work unmasks their own deeply embedded prejudices; just as we encourage teachers to help students organize, teachers must be helped to organize as well. Their isolation and marginalization undermine their emerging participatory practice. And we must understand that developing participatory practice is an organizational agenda, not just the responsibility of isolated teachers.

   All too often, participatory practice has come to mean creating a "slot" for a member of the community or the student body to be involved in the pre-existing decision-making structures. True partnership, however, demands that the processes themselves must be examined and, possibly, changed to reflect new

input, new experiences, new cultural backgrounds in the process. Skill assessment also has to change to reflect more respect for everyone's experiences, skills and aspirations. Susan Lytle at the University of Pennsylvania and Ron Solarzano at ETS in California are among those doing exciting work in alternative assessment. By and large, however, assessment continues to be viewed in the context of literacy as a school practice rather than as a social practice. Most literacy educators continue to *believe* that test scores reflect something that has a reality in settings other than schools. When adults enter literacy programs because they want to continue with their schooling, this may have some small justification. But most adults enter literacy programs because they want to use literacy skills in their lives, so it is *essential* to understand literacy as social practice. We still do not fully understand that when learners can fill in a job application form while sitting in class, that does not mean they can fill it in when they are standing in the hiring office, with a line of people waiting in back of them and an overworked personnel officer staring at them.

Even task-based tests must be understood within their limits. They may simulate the task, but they do not, and cannot, simulate the situation in which the task would be accomplished. They cannot simulate the shame, the stress, the worry, the fear of many literacy situations for adults in the US with low literacy skills. And they cannot simulate the collective problem solving, the group practice of literacy that is true of other situations.

Mainstream literacy work in the United States remains committed to a notion of literacy as non-political and as separate from social issues such as racism, sexism, class inequality, and poverty. We continue to see the problem framed in terms of individual stigma, shame, and responsibility. In a nation in which there has been compulsory schooling for many years, lack of literacy skills is considered an individual failing, although there is some recognition that in some parts of the country access to schooling has not been equitable. Still, adult literacy education is considered a "*second* chance". Even the increased media attention to literacy reinforces the messages that literacy is an individual's problem, and individual testimony is televised; the media have not been used in a strategic, political way to publicize actions involving and relevant to those whose voices have been silent.

Graduate education in adult literacy is proliferating, with new courses in teaching adults reading and writing skills. The best of these courses teach the whole language model, which incorporates many of our concerns about respecting adults' language, experience, dignity and dreams. They are not complemented with courses in political economy or organizing, however. And the mainstream literacy field continues to assume English language literacy as the focus of debate and development; minority language communities remain largely invisible and their issues marginalized. Debates about credentials for teachers terrify me; I do not want everyone socialized into the mainstream university's views of reading and writing education.

With a few notable exceptions, we have not been able to offer useful insights into the nature of political struggle that involves literacy development and community change. We have been stressing the importance of building coalitions, but an examination of the partners chosen by literacy organizations reveals an orientation to the dominant power structure - government officials, corporate

officers, other literacy organizations with which the territory is shared - rather than involvement of organizations which have been engaged in political struggle, know how to organize and are committed to social justice issues *per se*. All too often, coalitions have been built to insure organizational survival rather than to push change forward.

5. And I want to point to our continuing naive faith in the power of information to transform political structures. With the problem viewed as discrete, literacy viewed as autonomous and change viewed as a matter of individual initiative, the response is viewed in equally bureaucratic terms; a linear process of counting, informing, planning, and delivering services. The need to understand the *nature* of the problem is translated into the question: "How many illiterate adults are there?" We assume that the answer will be used by policy makers to justify allocating resources so that a "cure" will follow, in a linear fashion.

   In the United States, though, we have been counting so-called illiterate adults for at least twenty years, if we don't include the census estimates that go back to the nineteenth century. Each time the response has been that the counting mechanisms are not good enough, or that the estimates are so enormous that they go beyond that which can be addressed. Sometimes the numbers are used to justify resources for programs that serve the corporate sector. But more extensive federal action is delayed by a call for better and better counting mechanisms.

   Since there are no political initiatives at the same time to confront racism, class inequality, poverty, discrimination against linguistic minority groups, sexism and other related issues, counting becomes an end rather than a means. When literacy is separated from its social context, statistics alone cannot inform effective action. The American public persists in believing that literacy is an individual, rather than a social, concern.

6. Finally, I want to look at federal policy. Right now, federal literacy policy in the United States places capitalism at the center, and the policy research agenda is defined by counting individuals with literacy problems. I say capitalism rather than economic development, because the agenda is framed in terms of insuring profit, productivity and international competitiveness rather than by enhanced quality of life. It is an agenda of retrenchment rather than development. The central policy question that serves the government appears to be, "How many people do we have to change to maintain the status quo?"

   But the central policy question that serves the people with low literacy skills is different; it is "How can literacy development support communities in addressing their issues?" How does change happen at the community level, and what role can literacy development play? The relevant measures of success are not found on tests, but are reflected in indicators of racism, poverty, sexism, educational equity, access to productive work, and full participation as a citizen in democratic communities.

   At Literacy South, we have been working on two approaches to this question. In one approach, the literacy class acts as the central support mechanism from which students become involved in community action projects and use the literacy class as a forum for reflection, related skill development, and dissemination of information and ideas. For example, Jereann King, Director of

Programs, also teaches a literacy class in a northern, poor, rural county in North Carolina. She has been living there for many years, and knows the community and her students well. As community projects develop, such as a special project to plan new approaches to combat poverty in the county, Jereann helps students in her class to become involved. The entire class learns about and participates in the project through the involvement of a couple of students; the class, and Jereann, also deal with the political issues that arise as local officials resist new readers gaining some measure of power in their community.

In the second approach, we are learning how to help community organizations integrate literacy development into their work. For example, the Piedmont Peace Project organizes citizens in a mill town in North Carolina around issues of military spending, voter registration and citizen participation in local decision-making. Their work always has been politically oriented; their literacy class adds a new dimension as they specifically involve adults with low literacy skills in their organizing efforts.

In the United States, we have been working on learning how to engage in participatory research and participatory practice; we now face the challenge of creating a participatory policy development process. It will not be a linear, "efficient" process. It will be messy, because participatory processes always are messy.

Where do we go from here?

There are many important and exciting developments at the local level - the challenge is to figure out what we're learning, how to support people and organizations to have a larger impact, nationally, and to support each other in their work, locally. We have many bits and pieces scattered all over the United States that create the *potential* for constructive change in policy, practice and research.

The literacy field must work cooperatively with other fields - and we in the United States must work cooperatively with those in other countries - that are committed to insuring basic human rights and social justice. We have to move beyond abstract rhetoric to provide concrete, specific information about local practices, politics, policy and the process of change in specific situations. We have to be willing to name our struggles, to learn from each other, and to allow conflict.

My perspective has been particularly influenced by my experience; my work with Jereann King, Page McCullough and Jonathan Estes, the staff of Literacy South; my work with Jean Hammink, Jacque Cook and the other members of the board of the Literacy Network; and my work with Si Kahn, Cathy Howell, and Tema Okun, the staff of an organization based in North Carolina called Grassroots Leadership. Grassroots Leadership is committed to working together with others to build a progressive movement for social justice in the southern United States. They have helped me learn how to think about literacy work and organizing, and they have helped all of us at Literacy South feel connected to a larger social movement in the United States.

I appreciate this opportunity to share my learning with you; I am keenly aware of how much there is for *me* to learn from the work in many of your countries. In the United States, the nature of the social contract is considered fixed and known;

literacy is viewed as a social issue because it is seen as having an impact on the larger standard of living rather than because it is seen as having roots in social relations. But in nations in which the social contract is being renegotiated, such as Germany, or in parts of Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, or Africa, there are natural opportunities for literacy development to be part of that political process.

The social climate in the US today is overshadowed by fiscal crisis and political conservatism. Social change in a country that is not in the midst of revolution is an incremental, slow process punctuated by periods of upheaval, but supported by steady, dedicated organizing and learning. We must find ways to support the small but important changes that are happening, to blow on these embers so that, over time, they can spread, burning strongly. Some of the help, perspectives, knowledge and skills needed can be found through international networking. International communication and cooperation have never been more important.

Paul Bélanger asked me to "open the debate", and I hope I have raised some issues worthy of continued conversation. Thank you very much.

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FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY IN LATIN AMERICA

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1. Functional Illiteracy in Latin America: Quantitative Characteristics of the Problem

While the problem of functional illiteracy in developed countries has gained such a relevance in the last years, it could be said that it has been present for a long time in our Latin American countries.

Maybe it has not been called so. Maybe the problem of absolute illiteracy in some countries has taken up the whole range of the news and strategies.

However, early school drop-out is a fact that has concerned people, especially in those countries where absolute illiteracy seemed to be diminishing, and has impelled them to take new educational actions in different areas.

But one cannot deny the improvement experienced by Latin American education, mainly in the rate of school attendance among children between 7 and 12 years. This fact, that was already present in the seventies, has positively increased in the last decade, so one can state that definite school drop-out takes place, in most countries, at the age of 13 or older.[1] This does not mean that there is not an earlier drop-out during the first years of primary school, which in some cases is considerable.

About 9% of the students in Central and South America enter school too late, or abandon it too early. The rate of school attendance amounts to 80%, both in Central and South America, and to more than 90% in the English-speaking Caribbean and in the countries that belong to the Mexican Gulf.

Though among the motives to explain early school drop-out one can find some that do not belong to the system itself, and economic conditions appear to be one of the causes of the permanent and continuous repetition of classes by students. The high levels of repetition that exist in most countries of the region - one in four students (or even more than one because it is believed that this data may be underestimated) - speak of how ineffective school is. The school system is not able to generate in students, mainly in the poorest groups, a true learning process.

There are a couple of factors that verify these results. Among them it is important to mention the inadequacy of the school teaching process for the learning strategies of children of low economic level, an inadequacy that stems from the existing difference between cultural codes. This fact, which seems most important in order to understand permanent and continuous failure, becomes outstanding in the teaching of mathematics and language, subjects that strongly affect the final results of the students.

Due to this situation and to even more unfavourable conditions of the school system in the past decades, a great number of adults can be considered functional

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[1]Schiefelbein, E. and others: La enseñanza básica y el analfabetismo en América Latina y El Caribe: 1980 - 1987. In: *Boletín Proyecto Principal de Educación en América Latina y El Caribe*. Santiago: UNESCO/OREALC, Boletín 20, December, 1989, pp. 28-29.

illiterates. In fact, a high percentage of the Latin American adult population has not finished primary school. Even in those countries where there is a very low percentage of adults without any schooling (for instance Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica), the proportion of adults with unfinished primary school is, nevertheless, 50 or more percent.

This means that a great number of adults are participating in the labour market under these conditions. This market has become more and more restrictive and demanding in recent years, that is to say, it employs workers with a higher level of schooling in exactly the same jobs.

For instance, in 1970 in Chile, 41.2% of the bus drivers and manual workers had attended school between 4 and 6 years, but in 1980, only 14.9% of the same kind of workers had such a low number of years of schooling. Most of them had a higher level of education: between 7 and 10 years.

Jobs are restricted for those who have low schooling, but jobs do not disappear. By 1970, 23.8% of the unemployed had had 4 to 6 years of schooling and in 1980, 13.6% of the unemployed had unfinished schooling (4 to 6 years). Most of the unemployed have attended school for more than 10 years (50.9%).[2]

Low schooling, then, is related more to low income than to unemployment. The labour market stratifies itself but at the same time needs cheap labourers, though they are not qualified.

This leads to the maintenance of poverty among the disadvantaged economic groups, to the underestimation of the abilities presumably developed by more years of schooling, and to the continued marginalization of the popular sector with a minimum development of basic abilities.

The area where people with low schooling work "tolerates" a minimum performance. If it were more demanding, for instance in the field of agriculture, the workers could contribute more effectively to the development of that productive area.

Normally, the population with incipient schooling (three years or less) is considered in the official data as functionally illiterate. Nevertheless, it is clear that a few more years of schooling are not the solution to the problem of labour participation and do not ensure that the worker receives a suitable and worthy salary.

Hence, though the level of schooling appears to permit the evaluation of the problem, it is not an accurate indicator of magnitude, from a qualitative point of view.

2. About the Concept of Functional Illiteracy

As all concepts that are still being constructed, the concept of functionality in relation to literacy, or functionality related to illiteracy, has evolved in recent years. The concept of functionality that was first conceived as an answer to the economic requirements of capitalist society, has now been extended and includes other perspectives to the needs of the individual.

Though some reports of previous commentaries on adult education stressed that the importance given to the functional purpose emphasized the existing relationships

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[2]See: Infante, Isabel: *Juventud, Analfabetismo, Alfabetización en América Latina*. Santiago: UNESCO/OREALC, 1985, pp. 38-40.

between the needs of society and education, and between education and motivation and the desires of each individual, the problem lies in the fact that, in general, there is not a harmonious relationship between the needs of the society and those of individuals; moreover, this relationship is perceived, in many cases, as one that provokes conflicts.

That is why the Persepolis Declaration in 1975 emphasized that literacy would have been successful if it had been linked to the basic fundamental necessities of the people, taking into consideration their basic immediate needs up to their effective participation in social change. It would have been successful if it had not been limited to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, and if it had not subordinated literacy to short-term necessities disconnected from people. Persepolis considers literacy not only as a learning process of the abilities to read and write, but as a contribution to the liberation and plain development of each individual:

> "Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions to develop a critical conscience about the contradictions of society in which man lives, and about its objectives; at the same time, it stimulates his initiative and participation to create a project that can be worked out, that can transform the world and define the objectives of a real human development. It should unfold new approaches to obtain the domain of technology and of human relations. Literacy is not a goal in itself. It is a basic human right."[3]

One of the papers presented at the Conference is related to "functionalities of literacy", defining "functionality" as "a relationship between an independent variable, literacy in this case, and a dependent variable, whose range in this case goes from the environment of the person to his fight for his rights of justice and equality"..."There does not exist a non-relational, non-functional literacy: literacy is the first tool useful to understand, change and control the real world." That functionality includes all aspects of human life and holistic development. It is related to work, to culture (uses, beliefs, values), to different age groups, to their necessities, desires and expressions, to the demands of women who are discriminated against in many countries. But above all, the functionality of literacy is related to the fight of the poor, of those who are illiterate, of those who make up 60% of the people of the Third World.[4]

As well as the term functional literacy, which has been coined to refer to the relationship between literacy and the different social areas that require it, illiteracy has also been characterized in the same sense. Hence in 1978 the UNESCO General Conference adopted the following definition: "A person is a functional illiterate who cannot engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective

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[3]Declaration of Persepolis. In: International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods (IIALM): *Teaching Reading and Writing to Adults. A Sourcebook*. Teheran: IIALM, 1977, p. 636.

[4]Adiseshiah, Dr. Malcolm S.: Functionalities of Literacy. *Indian Journal of Education*. 1975, p. 3.

functioning of his group and community and also enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development."[5]

Functional illiteracy must refer, then, to all areas of human life including both the demands of productive work as well as those arising from active participation in the social network.

The relativity of the concept makes it very difficult to quantify and determine the problem, not only between countries with different levels of technological development even in Latin America, but also between groups in one and the same country. It is clear that it is quite different, in relation to the demands of the environment, to be an illiterate in the country from being one in the city, or to be in a place where there are a great number of aboriginal or traditional uses of language, with mainly oral transmission codes, from being one in a place with a greater influence of modern technology. In these cases, the differentiation and the complexity of the communication codes establish a great gap between individuals and groups.

In the main document presented at the Iberoamerican Technical Conference about Functional Illiteracy in 1988[6], which set out to define the contents of functional illiteracy, its necessary relationships with work, culture, popular organization, science and technology and participative democracy are mentioned.

In each one of these areas the abilities are listed that functional illiterates presumably do not have, so that they are restrained from participating in those areas. They include aspects that reveal a more intense participation which would allow *interacting within the area as a real subject.* For instance, in the field of work they mention the lack of developed abilities to understand the significance of history, of inner relationships, of scientific and technological aspects; in the area of science and technology they mention the poor approach to scientific knowledge from observation and theory about popular knowledge; also the lack of capacity to think independently, to argue, to assimilate and get hold of the fundaments of scientific knowledge; in relation to organizational and popular participation, they mention the incapacity to act as social subjects (the functional illiterate cannot answer to the demands of popular organization); in the field of culture, they mention the inability to recognize their own culture.

In analyzing this document, one realizes that we are confronted by *a new view of functional illiteracy.* We are not speaking here only about integration, meaning accommodation to an already existing society, but about a person who can think, who is able to move the necessary resources so as to collaborate in the process of history, from the point of view of the popular sector. Putting it the other way round, functional literacy should contribute to the transformation of individuals and popular groups into political subjects within the society. The individuals and the groups should develop the abilities needed not only to work, but also, and most important, to

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[5]Hamadache, A. and D. Martin: *Theory and Practice of Literacy Work. Policies, Strategies and Examples.* Paris/Ottawa: UNESCO/CODE, 1986, p. 14.

[6]Londoño, Luis Oscar: El analfabetismo funcional en América Latina. Main document presented at the Iberoamerican Technical Conference about Functional Illiteracy. Salamanca, Spain, October 1988 (Mimeo.)

participate, to build democracy from their view, to construct and strengthen their organizations; and to build the abilities needed to recreate and develop their culture.

Most of the projects that have dealt with functional literacy have related it to work within a society which has a strong social stratification and a strong division of labour, for instance, the EWLP. The abilities needed in each area are different and they can even be opposed. For a popular organization, for instance, a "critical attitude" is important, but for a job in a hierarchical relationship it is probably more important to know how to follow instructions and to have a "humble" and "obedient" attitude towards the norms.

Though the incapacity to be a social subject able to construct history is emphasized in the definition of functional illiteracy, one cannot leave aside the aspect of work. This is an issue that reveals the existing conflict between social structures and individuals; between their demands related to a stratified society and individual necessities. Thus, we finally come then to a society in which the worker must live.

If one analyses this view of "functionality", one perceives that the problem is evident in societies where there is a friction between cultures, ways of living and thinking, and where one culture dominates the other. It is evident in strongly stratified societies, in which the patterns of the dominant class are forced upon popular groups. It is more evident when those patterns are the ones that sustain the school system, and thus the school becomes inadequate for the popular groups, provoking in those groups a great school failure.

The problem becomes acute, for instance, in a country where urban modernization is taking over the traditional patterns of the rural areas, or in a country where "western" patterns are prevailing over the traditional aboriginal culture. These illiterate people or those with low schooling may be functional to their oral tradition, and disfunctional to a literate society. The problem is serious because it has to do with the culture of the person, the culture where he has formed and developed his cognitive strategies, his values, his way of living. Hence, it is not that simple to characterize the functional illiterates, not even in the terms suggested by the main Document of the Conference named above.

Taking into account all the aspects mentioned above, it is possible to state, as an hypothesis, that there are probably many ways of being a functional illiterate. The concept does not seem to be unitary. It is necessary to establish the characteristics that are most significant according to the criteria for the definition of functional illiteracy.

3. An Intent to Establish Criteria and Determine Abilities

When trying to define these criteria, considering the definition given by the document mentioned above as the basis of this work, one could examine *the aspects related to work, social participation and culture.*

In relation to participation in work, we must think of the characteristics required by the formal and the informal sector of the economy. The latter accepts most people coming from the popular sectors in our Latin American societies.

Another important issue seems to be social participation in community organizations.

Finally, it will be necessary to determine the link between the person and his or her own culture.

It would be convenient to distinguish, in all these areas, between cognitive aspects and attitudes.

In relation to work, its stratification within a capitalist model demands that the worker have specific characteristics. We can distinguish three main working groups, each one related to a definite structure of knowledge[7]:

- manual workers and supervision and control workers;
- administrative workers, technicians and dependent professionals;
- staff with planning and management functions.

We will consider the abilities needed by the first two groups, mainly the first one, because this is where the functional illiterates will probably interact.

According to Kern's and Schuman's classification[8], the jobs for the first group, that is to say, for manual workers and supervision and control workers, include jobs that range from craftsmanship (simple manual work) to jobs like watching measurement instruments. The classification includes fifteen types of jobs, machine control and machine operation, among others. It is important to stress that three fifths of the labour force of modern industries are working in this type of job.

For easier jobs, that is to say, for craftsmanship, manual work or repetitive work in some industries, the operation of machines or instruments, the required abilities are: *manual and mechanical abilities, responsibility and the capacity to work alone and under pressure.*

So, what is needed, fundamentally, is a specific *attitude* towards work, more than a cognitive ability.

For occupations that are more sophisticated but within the same range, like turning on machines and instruments, operating sets of machines and instruments, controlling automatic machines and watching the functioning of measurement instruments, the abilities required are:

- basic skills: reading, writing and calculation;
- specific practical skills that are quickly acquired by practice;
- personality characteristics: responsibility and initiative;
- a special ability to respond to sensory signals;
- the capacity to follow instructions from handbooks or catalogues, etc.

In these occupations, stress is also put on the attitude of the individuals more than on the cognitive abilities. These could be developed in the first years of schooling.

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[7]Gómez, Victor Manuel: Efectos de la innovación tecnológica sobre el empleo y la calificación occupacional. In: UNESCO/OREALC: *Vinculación entre la educación y el mundo del trabajo.* Santiago: UNESCO/OREALC, 1987, p. 64ff.

[8]Kern, H. and Schuman: Cambio técnico y trabajo industrial, con polarización tendencial da las capacitaciones medias. In: Labarca (ed.): *Economía política de la educación.* Mexico: Nueva Imagen, 1980, pp. 150-151.

If we take into account these demands, the years of schooling should not be so determinant when hiring a person in any of these working groups. But, as some years of schooling are always demanded, one might think that another kind of influence upon the workers is ascribed to schooling, and that might be the acceptance of socially desired norms, humility, and obedience.

For the workers of the second group, technicians, administrative workers and dependent professionals, the required work training is not much higher: in the cognitive area it would correspond to the first years of high school, and it could be acquired by means of training and learning on the job itself. In relation to attitudes, it is necessary to be responsible, punctual, orderly, to be respectful with superiors, to have assumed the organizational objectives and norms, to have a greater independence and initiative in taking decisions[9]. Other specific technical abilities might be developed at work.

On the other hand, and considering another view, it is stated that any work demands from the worker the capacity to function at *some level with information, people and things*. The different types of occupations would demand levels of more or less complexity in each one of these functions. According to this classification, thousands of types of occupations have been described [10].

Tasks of different degrees of complexity have been described for each one of these areas. In relation to *information* the sequence is:

- compare
- copy
- calculate
- join
- analyse
- coordinate
- synthesize.

In the functions related with *people*, the tasks are organized from lower to higher degrees of complexity, but one must bear in mind that this cannot be a rigid classification if we consider that the relationships among people involve a great complexity in themselves. These tasks are:

- receive instructions, help
- wait on people
- speak, indicate
- persuade
- entertain
- supervise

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[9]Carnoy, M.: Segmented Labour Market: A Review of The Theoretical and Empirical Literatures and its Implications for Education Planning. In: Gómez, V.: op.cit.

[10]*Dictionary of Occupational Titles*. Washington: US Department of Labor, US Employment Service. 1977.

- instruct
- negotiate
- orientate, advise.

In the functions related with *things* (machines or equipment), the stipulated tasks are:

- drive
- feed
- manipulate
- operate
- control
- check accuracy
- assemble.

To determine the relationship between functional illiteracy and labour demands in the formal sector of the economy, it could be important to examine how these abilities are present, if they are, in the population that is considered functionally illiterate.

On the other hand, it would also be necessary to consider the abilities demanded for participation in informal sectors of the economy, where most young adults from popular areas work.

There are no studies that allow us to determine all the abilities that a person needs to participate adequately in the informal sector. Among them it is important to mention the capacity to start different types of job (initiative; capacity to look for new alternatives).

It also seems to be useful, in this same area, to question the capacity to establish communication, assertiveness, the capacity to convince others, to advise, and to form groups.

In short, from the point of view of *work*, one should examine whether functional literacy, besides presenting a limited achievement of the basic skills in reading, writing and calculation, also has to do with problems concerning the capacity to communicate and the capacity to follow instructions.

Now, from the point of view of *social participation*, one should investigate the relation between the capacity to communicate and the interest to commit oneself to the group, the sector. The "critical attitude" that should also be investigated here is difficult to define. Besides, those individuals who have developed a "critical attitude", as some studies have shown, do not have a homogeneous "critical attitude": they hold different positions according to situations.

From the point of view of *culture*, it would be important to determine the effective link the individual has with his or her culture and the knowledge he or she has of it.

There is another perspective that is not explicitly named in the above mentioned document, but that is somehow connected to some of the aspects considered before: it relates to the demands that stem from a modern society or from one that is in process of modernization. In relation to this topic we could name many attitudes or conducts that should be analyzed to discover how adequate the person is to meet the demands of a modern society.

However, it is clear that the process of modernization that has taken place in Latin American society is not the same one that has taken place in Europe. Latin America had an exogenous process of modernization that goes together with cultural expressions that belong to each country or community. That is why it would not be right to think that all the behavior patterns of European modernization were valid for Latin America. On the contrary, one should distinguish what patterns could be compatible to the Latin American way of life. As there are no studies about this issue, we could tentatively name just some of them, for instance: the capacity to change[11], to look for new alternatives, as a demand of rationality, that can be expressed in the solution of concrete problems.

4. Ongoing Research in Some Countries of Latin America

Considering how important it is to determine the main characteristics of functional illiteracy in Latin America in order to design educational strategies for that population, it has been considered relevant within REDALF to carry out a regional research that can establish those characteristics.

This becomes more and more urgent because the rate of absolute illiteracy has decreased in some countries, but not the rate of functional illiteracy, which is closely related to school drop-out and, in general, to failure in primary school.

The issue has aroused the interest of most Latin American countries. It is perceived that this is a problem that all will have to face with efficient strategies in years to come.

The research has been designed in two stages. In the first one, five countries will take part, and later on, all the countries interested will have the possibility to participate. Chile, Argentina, Peru, El Salvador and Bolivia will take part in the first stage.

Taking into account what has been explained before, the problem of the labour aspect, participation in organizations, and the relationship with culture will be approached. The research also considers cognitive aspects and attitudes.

The research focuses mainly on the areas of reading and writing, basic arithmetic, and social and labour skills, investigating efficiency in these areas and relating them to some characteristics of the adults concerned: schooling, sex, employment status and participation in social organizations.

To obtain this data, the research includes the application of various instruments: a reading and writing test, a basic arithmetic test, a social and labour skill test and a questionnaire on personal data.

The abilities that are normally required in the areas of basic mathematics and reading and writing from adult individuals of urban and rural sectors that are in the process of modernization will be measured.

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[11]This characteristic is also named by Londoño, L.O., op.cit.

4.1 *Reading and Writing Measurement*

Since we thought the process of reading mainly a process where hypotheses are confronted with the written text, we had to build a reading and writing instrument that considered on the one hand the abilities to decodify, to understand a text and to write, and on the other hand, an instrument that presented texts with gradually increasing complexity, according to certain criteria.

To build this we took into account the proximity or distance (more or less difficulty) the text had to or from the environment of the reader, in other words, with his daily life, and also with some specific linguistic aspects.

That is why the reading texts refer to everyday situations of the life of an adult, to food recipes, to prescriptions and to the news. These latter were the most difficult texts and they were taken from the newspapers.

Writing is related to situations that adult people normally experience, writing a note for someone and writing a letter.

The texts were analyzed according to their "readability" and graded according to their linguistic difficulty. This difficulty was measured by the number of polysyllabic words, the length of the sentences, and the number of low frequency words. We followed here a technological approach to reading, in which the length of the sentences, the length of the words and their frequency of use in a determined language are some of the linguistic factors that are related to "readability"[12].

Nevertheless, most authors agree that one of the most significant factors that affect the readability of a text is the quality of its vocabulary, that is to say, its higher or lower frequency within the oral language. But it is very difficult to have lists of current words, because language is something alive that is constantly being renewed, and the variations between oral and written language must be considered.

That is why two factors were chosen that are related to the difficulty of words according to the frequency of use: the frequency of polysyllabic words (four or more syllables) and the length of the sentences, because normally the sentences that are longer have a more complex structure[13].

When measuring comprehensive reading, it was convenient to consider both reading abilities and the difficulty of the text, determined by some of the factors already mentioned. Thus, it was possible to build an instrument that had a gradually increasing complexity.

The abilities that were measured corresponded to some determined by Davis[14]. Among hundreds of them, Davis distinguished nine, six of which were significant. These abilities can be classified in general and specific abilities.

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[12]For further information, see: Infante, Isabel: *Educación, Comunicación y Lenguaje. Fundamentos para la alfabetización de adultos en América Latina.* Mexico, D.F.: CEE, 1983, pp. 128-137.

[13]According to the statements about readability presented by Alliende, Felipe, in his thesis to obtain a Ph.D. at the University of Cardiff. (1991)

[14]Davis, F.B.: Fundamental Factors of Comprehension in Reading. In: *Psychometrika*, 9, 1944.

General abilities would be:

- the recognition of the meaning of words (vocabulary) and
- verbal reasoning, both inductive and deductive.

Specific abilities correspond to:

- following the organization of a paragraph and identifying antecedents and references;
- recognizing literary devices and identifying the tone and style of the author;
- deducing from the context;
- answering questions, whose answers may be explicit in the text or in the form of paraphrase.

Though some researchers question the distinction between abilities, other studies have shown that there are differences when speaking about good or poor readers. In the first case, ability seems indivisible. In the second case, abilities can be distinguished[15].

This means that it would be difficult to "separate into parts" the process of reading comprehensively done by good readers, but it would present no problem to do so in those who read with difficulty. In a research carried out by the author of this paper, the achievement of abilities was differentiated among both good and poor readers, but a factor analysis of the data indicated a high correlation between the abilities.

Taking into account the validity of measuring abilities, we intend to measure, by means of the reading and writing instrument, the abilities to:

- identify and infer the main idea;
- identify specific aspects, explicitly expressed, with or without variations;
- identify the organization of a report;
- infer characteristics or actions of the characters;
- infer the meaning of a word or sentence from the context;
- infer cause and consequence;
- express oneself in writing.

In measuring writing, we consider aspects related to the clarity of expression, for instance, the logical organization of the content, accuracy of the vocabulary and grammar concordance, and aspects related to the norms of written language, that is to say, spelling, punctuation, accentuation.

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[15]See Samuels, S.J.: Hierarchical Subskills in the Reading Acquisition Process. In: Guthrie, Y.T., ed.: *Aspects of Reading Acquisition.* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

4.2 *The Measurement of Basic Mathematics*

It is generally said that there are no mathematics illiterates - referring to absolute or pure illiterates - because adult people in their daily life somehow solve many problems related to mathematics, and for that solution they employ many and different strategies. The selection of those strategies seems to be determined by their cultural environment and, most importantly, by their participation in labour.

When one intends to measure the achievement of adults in some mathematical areas, one faces the problem of culture, even if one intends to translate each problem into real situations of the members of the group where the measurement is being applied. The difficulty is that when the problem is written, it implies a formalization of it and this may cause the person not to know how to solve or face it, even though the same problem might be easily solved by the same person when presented in his or her social or labour context[16].

On the other hand, many times people come into contact with written formalization of arithmetic, for instance in the news, in the prices of articles, when they have to declare taxes, and so on - situations that they sometimes have to face.

Hence this measurement of achievements in basic mathematics must specifically consider those situations of adult life where the written formalization of mathematics is used. These situations would constitute important aspects to determine the levels of achievement of functional illiterates.

It is also important to measure the achievement of the four basic skills, considering that there are probably fewer cultural differences in their development than in the strategies to solve problems.

Besides, measuring achievements in daily life must take into account all those skills that the environment requires, for instance, proportions, fractions and measurements.

Considering these aspects, an arithmetic test was built. It measured numbering, addition, substraction, multiplication, division, fractions, proportions, measurement and geometry. All these were present by means of daily life situations of adults belonging to popular sectors.

It is worth stressing the importance of carrying out the strategies used by adults in the solution of problems. These would be a great help for the design of more adequate learning strategies for adults' processes.

4.3 *The Study of Social and Labour Skills*

One way of measuring these capacities and attitudes is by means of the perception each person has about him/herself. There are many studies in this area[17]. The self-

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[16]Carraher, Teresinha Nunes: *Sociedade e Inteligencia.* Sao Paulo: Cortez Ed., 1989.

[17]See Montero, P.: Autopercepciones académicas y calidad de la educación. Elementos teóricos, evidencias empíricas y sugerencias pedagógicas. Unpublished. 1990.

perception reveals the way in which the "self" has been structured by experience in each individual.

Self-representations come from different sources: from the observations each person makes about his/her own actions, from the evaluation he/she makes of his/her capacities, from the interaction with others, from the opinions given by others. This process is also regulated by cultural norms.

Tentatively an instrument was built to measure the self-perception of capacities related to jobs or simple work, considering the three areas previously mentioned (in relation to information, people and things). The handling of information, expressed in calculating and analyzing, was measured by the arithmetic and reading and writing tests.

It also seemed important to investigate the self-perceptions related to other attitudes that might point to greater possibilities of insertion and creative participation in the environment. Some of these were: autonomy, capacity to find alternatives, to solve problems, to communicate, and the relationship with the culture and the sector.

Some of these attitudes might be indicators of active participation in organizations, for instance, the capacity to form and organize groups and the interest in working in the sector.

In short, from a labour point of view, the following capacities would be measured:

- the capacity to manage
- the capacity to follow instructions
- the capacity to solve problems
- the capacity to be autonomous
- the capacity to work in groups
- the capacity to find alternatives.

From the point of view of participation in social organizations, the following would be studied:

- the capacity to form and organize groups
- the capacity to be autonomous
- the active linking with the sector
- the relationship with one's own culture
- the capacity to communicate
- the capacity to solve problems
- the capacity to find alternatives.

The relationship with one's own culture would have its own indicators.

4.4 *Validation of the Instruments*

All the instruments were validated in a sample of 350 adults who attended night school in Santiago and in some regions of Chile.

According to the analysis, the reading and writing and arithmetic tests were highly reliable. Some items were corrected after the data given by an item-test correlation and by calculation of the chi square.

In the case of the test of social and labour skills, a factor analysis was made to test the accuracy with which it was measuring, and some factors were clearly pointed out. This process helped to correct the test.

4.5 *Determining the Sample*

The universe is the adult functional illiterates, that is to say, those who do not have the required abilities to integrate themselves and participate creatively in their environment, in this case, work and social organizations.

Since one of the main characteristics of this group is that they do not have a complete primary school attendance, this aspect was determinant in the selection of the sample.

We then decided to investigate the characteristics of a group of 300 adults with incomplete primary schooling, selected from the home enquiry of each country.

Adults with incomplete primary schooling from some of the extremely poor areas of the capital and from some critical areas that do not belong to the capital were selected. By "critical areas" we refer to rural or urban places in which the condition of functional illiterates becomes extremely prejudicial. They are places that are submitted to accelerated processes of change and disorganization: in El Salvador, the regions where the repatriated and disinherited have been placed; in Chile, rural sectors impacted by agroindustry; in Argentina and Peru, rural areas affected by accelerated modernization (the humid pampas, Tucumán with industrial cultivation of sugar cane, Valle del Río negro, fruit; Tarapoto in Peru).

4.6 *Results of the Research*

It is hoped that the research will give valuable results about the profile of the functional illiterates in some countries of Latin America. The relationship between the abilities developed, the social and labour skills acquired, and the characteristics in terms of sex, occupation, schooling, etc., will enable us to deduce important conclusions. These will enable us to design educational strategies and actions adequate to this sector.

4.7 *Research Progress*

The design and instruments of the research were discussed with the participant countries, in a workshop that took place at OREALC, in Santiago, Chile in 1990.

At present, the countries are refining the instruments, and some of them have already selected the sample and are collecting the information. It is hoped that they will conclude the research by the beginning of the next year.

We have already foreseen some problems in relation to the possibility of comparing the data, due to the difficulty of obtaining the data from the home enquiry proposed, and, therefore, to the difference in the ways of obtaining the sample.

Anyhow, though they will be treated as "cases", the results of the national researches will be useful to give a vision, though partial, of the characteristics of functional illiteracy of some countries of Latin America.

Conclusion

The results of the research certainly will not give a whole vision of the problem. However, its value lies in the intent of grasping a reality that is as relative as functional illiteracy.

There are no empirical studies about this topic, but there are many assumptions, many statements that vary according to the influence of different theories.

A research of this type may have many problems of which we are aware. Nevertheless, we believe that if we can state with certainty some of the characteristics of what we call "functional illiteracy", or can throw some light upon the disfunctionalities of the individuals who do not actively and creatively participate in employment or in the social network, we shall have taken a great step forward that will enable us to develop adequate educational strategies for vast sectors of Latin America.

SOCIOCULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF LITERACY: LITERACY IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

by Brian Street
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I want to try to clarify, at least as far as I see them, some of the key concepts and theories in the area of literacy in an international context. I will refer to some ethnographic material to illustrate some of the conceptual and theoretical issues and I want to question some of the assumptions we make about what literacy is. I want to do so via the shift that has been mentioned numerous times at this conference towards qualitative research and in my own particular area towards ethnographic research. I will explain what I mean by that in a moment as well.

I am going to draw on a range of research in different societies and cultures and over time which was not necessarily policy-oriented, but which has implications, I think, for policy. In some ways I think I want to flesh out what Paul Bélanger, Director of UIE, described as the crystallizing of the epistemological rupture - how does that come out in French, "la rupture épistémologique"? Probably quite well actually, but in English it sounds a little philosophical. Anyway, I think there has been a shift. It is at the level of epistemology, at the level of what we mean by knowledge and as Hanna Fingeret said earlier: who controls knowledge and who defines knowledge? Those are the areas.

But I want to start in the tradition of current more open-ended research approaches, by talking just a little bit about how I arrived here, at these ideas and in this field.

I went to Iran to do anthropological field research in the early 1970s. I went up to villages in the mountain area near the city of Mashhad, which is on the north-east border of Iran, near to Afghanistan. I had not gone particularly to study literacy.

In those days anthropologists went out to study everything: the economics, politics, religions, ideas - you just had a chapter on each. But having come out of an undergraduate degree in English literature, I think maybe I found myself focusing on literacy and education. And it quickly became apparent there was variation in these villages in the way in which literacy was used and perceived. So I finished writing about three different kinds of literacy there. One was a traditional Koranic Maktab school where students were learning, partly through rote learning, but not entirely. There was also question and analysis, learning the Koran and texts about the Koran. There was also a state school that had been introduced by the Shah's educational reforms where both girls and boys would supposedly go all day for education. Thirdly, there was what I eventually termed "commercial literacy" which was the uses of reading and writing around the trading, the buying and selling of fruit, in which this village specialised. The villagers were selling apples, cherries and other mountain fruits down the road to the city of Mashhad and across a long distance to Teheran, a thousand miles away over rough tracks. In order to do that successfully, and commercially, they had to write a great deal - they had to write labels on boxes; they had to keep lists. People were carrying bits of paper around with all kinds of references as to who they had lent money to, who they had borrowed apples from, how many apples had gone off on this truck. Cheque books

were continually being pulled out and signed, there was a local branch of a bank. So there was a lot of literacy around.

But then I started as an anthropologist wanting to pull this out in a more general way, looking at the literature that was available to help me locate this experience in a broader cross-cultural perspective. And in those days - we are talking about the early to mid 1970s - there was hardly anything that spoke to that situation. I felt rather similar to Hanna Fingeret, who spoke earlier about the experience she has had, and to other practitioners working with people in their real everyday literacy practices, in contrast with what the literature was talking about, which appeared something quite different.

The literature that I could find was talking about a great divide between literate and illiterate. It asked questions about what kind of cognitive leaps people who are literate make from the "illiterate". And there were a range of characteristics attributed to the literate which so differentiated them from the illiterate that it became what I termed a new great divide. There had been an old great divide in anthropology and there still is in our culture's representations of the Third World. There is a world of rationality, cognitive development, democracy and critical reasoning, all associated with literacy. On the other side are people living in darkness, embedded in their own cultural practices, unable to be critical and unable to be reflective, and lacking cognitive skills, and they are the "illiterates". These days that sounds like a ridiculous caricature. But if you look at a great deal of literature, particularly at that period, and some of it still continues, that is what the underlying models represented. It did not speak at all to the situation I was in. The people I was talking with were some more and some less intelligent than I was and they developed some in this way and some in that. They were people. Some were involved in literacy practices in commercial areas, some in the Maktabs, some in schooling, and some were learning to move from one to the other, which was a part of what my research was about - how you developed the Koranic literacy which was taught for one set of purposes and adapted it to the literacy needs of the commercial situation. So there was moving and there was change going on. This idea of a great divide and of cognitive leaps seemed quite meaningless in relation to that.

You then look at development literature. To the development literature: Development with a big "D" from Unesco amongst other bodies was all about how we can bring light into darkness. Here are these people all over the world who are illiterate - how sad; how can they manage with their lives and the world? How can they possibly be doing it without all the things that we have, that literacy supposedly brings us? So there was a sub-world being represented there. And yet I was living and talking every day with the people who by those criteria were in this sub-world of illiteracy and they did not feel like a sub-world at all - they felt like people. And we were having quite interesting theological debates, many stimulated by my presence as a non-Muslim in an Islamic society moving up to the revolution. My presence generated and stimulated a lot of discussion around what it meant in a particular Sura of a Koran to describe anomalies as "najes", unclean. A great deal of discussion about boundaries, cleanliness, purity. They held analytic debates of the same kind I might have in the University of Sussex with graduate students. It was quite meaningless to try to put any kind of great divide, literate/illiterate label on them.

So I found myself among a number of other researchers for whom the standard views on literacy were inadequate to the experience of our research settings, notably

Shirley Brice Heath in the USA and various others. Realizing that we had to work not only to describe what we had experienced, but to find analytic tools for lifting that experience into a more general comparative representation. Some of the concepts I want to talk about now have arisen from that background. Most of the examples that I am going to give are about people who by the standardized test would be called illiterate, which I think demonstrates how meaningless and unhelpful such standards are.

We need, then, to draw out some theories and concepts which enable us to compare across cultures without falling into the traps set by our own ethnocentric standards: not the detail, not the trivia, not our cultural impositions, but what kind of analytic notions we can use to see what is similar and what is different from one culture to another.

In a field like literacy, the first conceptual issue is to recognize the sheer power in itself, of naming and defining. The recognition that naming and defining are key elements of power relations contrasts with the fear that naming and defining is somehow an academic and semantic debate to be left to the people sitting in seminar rooms while we get on with real practice - I have heard that argument many a time. And that, it seems to me, is disempowering oneself. The power to name and define is absolutely crucial. Just one example I will give at this stage, then I will come back to others.

If you think about the power of the word literacy in the current world to mobilize resources and activity and look at the label "International Literacy Year", I ask you for how many people the word literacy in that title "International Literacy Year" is actually code for illiteracy. When you encounter the phrase, you do not read the word literacy in it as being about what people are doing with reading and writing in the sense that I am interested as a researcher or you are interested as teachers. In that context we read literacy to mean illiteracy. Many documents produced during that year trying to raise funds and draw attention to literacy, reinforced this idea of illiteracy as a problem. It was not literacy as a problem it was illiteracy that we were being asked to think about - International Illiteracy Year. And the power of that propaganda term firstly to mobilize resources, but then of course to define negatively the recipients of all this activity is evident: they are again these sad disempowered, uncritical, embedded, cognitively deprived and culturally deficited sets of people. The models are there underpinning some of the key words that we use in the field. So defining and naming them and redefining them is crucial.

So I just want to suggest a few concepts that are working more positively in the field that I am involved in. I am mainly involved at a research level in what is called "ethnographic research" and although it emerged originally from the discipline of social anthropology, ethnography is actually a way of working, a method that operates in a number of different disciplines. Educationalists, for instance, talk about the ethnography of the classroom. The social psychologists Scribner and Cole, whose work was absolutely crucial in overcoming the great divide theory, studied how the Vai people of Liberia used literacy in terms of an ethnographic approach as well as combining it with some social, psychological tools. An ethnographic approach basically refers to a method of study that involves working closely with people who you are trying to understand, learning their language and spending a period of time with them beyond formal questionnaire or survey work.

So what I was doing in an Iranian village by living there for 9-12 months at a time, coming back for 6 months, going away and coming back again over those periods of time, was what in my discipline is called anthropological ethnographic research. You do not necessarily have a formal set of questionnaire questions, you have some concepts, some issues and you follow them through as people talk and you change them as you listen to people. Ethnographic research in the classroom and the sociological ethnographic research around new technologies that Jean-Paul Hautecoeur mentions, involve similar methods. It is qualitative, it is fine-tuned, it is rather micro in its content, but, it is very macro comparative in its final aim, which is trying to find things that are not only specific, but also general. What is the specificity of the situation and how does it relate to the generality of a wider world? What kind of concepts can bridge that? It is very tempting to go into situations with a concept from your own culture, impose it on that situation and assume it means the same there. Doing ethnographic research blows that one very quickly. This has been particularly evident in the field of literacy. You arrive in an Iranian village with a model of literacy learnt from the great divide theory and you discover that it is not how they use and perceive literacy. You have to adjust your concepts and the questions they generate. It is very difficult, it seems to me, to imagine how you might adjust the conceptual framework with which you come to a field, without at some point doing something that has an ethnographic element in it. What I like about ethnographic research, and what links it with practitional work in this field, I think, is that the question of who sets the agenda is itself on the agenda. You do not just define the agenda. You may start with your agenda with these concepts and you have finally to change, to remove them.

I want now to consider two of the concepts that have developed in the last few years around this area and have proved more useful than some of the ones we all started with. These are, firstly, the concept of a literacy event, and secondly, the concept of literacy practices. By literacy event, Shirley Brice Heath means any situation in which reading and/or writing are involved. It seems so mundane you might think why bother. However, if you are trying to operationalize your research either for purposes of comparative analysis or for policy reasons, you need to have something to look at. What are you going to look at? You want to avoid looking at the things that you assume from your culture are worth looking at. You want to try to find out what are they doing. Literacy events are probably sufficiently neutral as an operational concept to enable you to go into a variety of situations and look for whatever it is that is happening. You might then be prepared to look at some aspects of literacy that in your own culture would not otherwise count. For instance, some very interesting recent research on graffiti has emerged from this perspective. Now from a teacher's point of view graffiti is mainly a moral and disciplinary issue. When kids carve with their pen knives "I love so and so" on their desks that is immediately a disciplinary issue. Teachers are worried about what has happened to the desk and also that this is not proper literacy anyway, you are meant to be writing in a book. From a literacy research point of view that is a literacy event. Let us suspend judgement about the morality and the discipline of it. These kids are involved in writing. What does it mean to them? What are they using it for? How to relate to other kids using it? There is a lot of research, some of which I have put on the list there about these alternative literacies which in a sense are hard to get at unless you start some neutral concepts like literacy events. Shirley Brice Heath coined that term

by analogy with a notion of speech events which is used by socio-linguists to describe acts in which speech is involved.

However, although it is a useful starting point, it seems to me, the concept of "literacy event" is not quite satisfactory on its own, because it is still rather empirical and descriptive. It gets you started, you can see an event which involves reading and/or writing. This conference is an overdetermined literacy event with the piles of paper we have got here and such like. But, it does not make sense to any of us except for the fact that underneath the actual event we have ideas about what the uses and meanings of the events is. And anyone from outside coming and looking at this situation is only going to see a lot of behaviour. People moving about writing, reading, taking notes, looking up from texts, shuffling paper. Now what does all that paper mean? It seems that we need another concept for operationalizing research that will focus on the combination of the actual event with also the ideas about what it means to those involved, what ideas underpin their literate behaviour. I want to use the concept of literacy practices to signal that, rather in some ways deriving from the Marxian notion of praxis. So here in Germany we can translate practices back into praxis if you like, which is a slightly different use, I think, of practices than I have been hearing sometimes in literacy circles. It is not a matter of imposing one definition on another, but of discussing what we mean by these terms and making explicit what follows from one usage rather than another. Very often in the field of literacy teaching, and literacy work linked with adult literacy students, the notion of literacy practice is located in the classroom as being what is happening with what the teacher and the students are doing. Those are termed literacy practices in that context and practitioners are trying to focus on the particular behaviour of students and their interactions with teachers. I want to use the concept of literacy practices in a more abstract, analytic and comparative sense to refer to the combination of actual behaviour and underlying conceptualization of it that is involved in any particular uses and meanings of literacy. With that analytic tool I think you can then start looking at literacy practices in different cultures and in different times and trying to pull out what it means to those involved. In the context of a conference such as this, for instance, we might then ask what models of literacy practice people are employing in order to make sense of the behaviour we are all engaged in. So I want to use the concept of literacy events and literacy practices in order to be able to compare cross-culturally what is going on in this field.

That links to a broader level of theory. These are operational concepts if you like - literacy practices and literacy events. But, at a broader level I want to look at what theories about literacy - including theories of literacy practices and events - have been developed over the years and that both researchers and people in society work with. I would start from the anthropological premise that everybody in every society has theories about what they are up to. They may not turn them into a systematic theory in the way that our job in universities often involves systematizing the ideas, but everybody actually works with theories implicitly if not explicitly. Well, I want to just pull out a couple of very broad brushstrokes. The distinction that I want to make is the one that Geraldine Murnagh referred to in her paper, between autonomous and ideological models of literacy. It seems to me, looking at what the literature had to say about literacy in the 70s and early 80s in the fields of anthropology, history, psychology, development and education, that there was a consistency around the underlying assumption as to what literacy was. And that consistency was around the

idea that literacy was a single thing with a big "L" and a single "Y". I think people at this conference are already quite aware of the problems with that and they are continually talking about literacies in the plural and literacies with a small "l". But until recently it was what I refer to as the autonomous model of literacy that dominated such gatherings. One of its basic assumptions is that there is a single thing called Literacy - an independent variable which has consequences which you can research. So you take this thing called Literacy from one place, you put it in another and the assumption is that you can read off consequences, both for individuals and for society as a whole. In some of the early significant articles in the field, the focus was on the consequences of literacy, or the significance, or the impact of literacy. Nowadays this starting point is seen as extremely problematic. The consequences of literacy that were drawn off from the autonomous model of literacy were that literacy - autonomously as it were, and in itself irrespective of social context - could have the effect of raising cognitive levels, imbuing people with critical, rational and reflective thought. The example that was often used, and it seemed reasonable enough, was to say that once you can write things down they are separated from yourself and then you can look at them, compare and be critical. It sounds like a perfectly reasonable analytic argument for saying that it does not matter where you are in the world if you can do that, through having literacy you can have a critical consciousness. If we think a bit harder about what is involved in these notions, however, you have to say: well, it depends what people are writing, what they mean by it. And what about people who are not using writing, are they not finding methods of detaching themselves, of developing critical consciousness and being disembedded from their cultural context and learning to compare and criticise? There is a very rich anthropological literature on so-called oral cultures, which I would prefer to think of as oral dimensions of cultures which are always mixed oral-literate these days. There is no culture not in contact with literacy somewhere along the line whilst all literacy practices are embedded somehow in oral practices. There is a rich literature though, on the ways in which the oral dimensions of social life involve techniques, mechanisms and conventions for doing all the things attributed to literacy, detachment, separation of self from context, critical consciousness, etc.

I will provide just one simple example from some research in Philadelphia. The use by adolescents of what are called "he said she said" stories. You tell a story, but you do not say it in your voice, you say he or she said. You have already distanced the responsibility for what is being said from yourself to some other person. Amy Shuman, who studied these practices amongst adolescents in a Philadelphia High School, was particularly interested in the question of entitlement - who was entitled to tell a story, to make a claim to control knowledge, to make a statement? Well, we find all kinds of devices in the oral as well as the literate world for shifting our responsibility for what we are saying. My kinds are really into using passives. The cup fell to the floor, I did not drop it. Nothing to do with me, it fell to the floor. There are all kinds of ways in which, in oral discourse, we can distance ourselves from responsibility, from authority, and assert critical, analytic positions, the kinds of intellectual procedures that had previously been attributed only to literacy. The idea that only literacy does these things, is peculiar - in fact a peculiar western academic idea. The literacy practices that academics in a particular sub-culture in the west have been engaged in, are treated as the only way to achieve detachment, criticalness, etc., and anyone who does not have that particular literacy is described as illiterate,

deprived, in deficit and such like, cognitively unable to be reflective and detached. This is the heart of what I term the "autonomous" model of literacy. When it is carried off around the world it is simply imposing one cultured view of literacy on other cultures, which may attribute different meanings and uses to literacy. It is loaded, it is not at all neutral. The autonomous model represents literacy as though it were a skill, a technology a neutral tool. You pick it up and then these things follow. People will say, you teach people to write and afterwards they can read the bible of Marx, it's up to them. The ethnographer would say that is not true. It sounds simple again. It simply is not true. Because you do not learn to read and write in a vacuum. You don't firstly learn "the basics" and then do social things with it. The act of learning is already a social act. It is embedded in a social situation and it's got ideological overtones. That brings me to the alternative model that I want to pose to the autonomous model of literacy, which is what I call the "ideological" model of literacy.

I get a lot of resistance for using the word ideological. Particularly in America, it's hard to get through the customs control sometimes with "ideology" in your baggage and part of the reason for that is because in America it has come to mean Stalinist "East-European" top-down dogmatic, political, mindless control. That's what the word ideology means in lots of western circles now. So there is a danger in using a word which has that load. But I think there is enough history in it and enough usefulness in it to recuperate it. There is a lot of work going on in post-Marxian, shall we call them, intellectual traditions in Europe where the word ideological is a very powerful tool for understanding the nature of the relationship between ideas and practice. And what it particularly signals is the ways in which we internalize ideas, theories, models about the political process, about personhood, about identity - and about literacy. The reason I want to use it is, that for me it always expresses power relations. People have said, why don't you talk about a cultural model of literacy - that's what you seem to be saying. We agree the autonomous model of literacy is flawed. Let's replace it with a cultural model, and then we will look at the different cultures' meanings and uses. Some colleagues in New York at the Teachers College are producing work on assessment that refers to autonomous and pragmatic models of assessment and they want to use the word pragmatic rather than ideological because of some of the history and weight of it. I want to stick to ideological because I think when you use ideological you signal quite strongly and clearly that whenever we are looking at literacy practices we are looking at contests over power. And that ranges from what we said earlier about the kind of power that UNESCO documents might have, the power that the academic discourse might have, the power to name and label; and also the kind of power that practitioners might have in relation to students, and the power that students can take in relation to practitioners and academics. There are always around literacy practices struggles over power. And some of those struggles are precisely over definition of meaning.

You may see someone who is going to do a research project on a local housing estate in Brighton who says, I am going to look at the causes of illiteracy and how it is connected with cultural deprivation, poor motherhood (that's one of the classical ones) and inadequate working class cultural norms and values. For them to suggest that this is also a neutral approach to the study, that this is purely a scientific effort, completely disguises the ideological force of what they are saying there about the relationship between working class life and the professional middle class world they

are coming from. And that of course applies to the kind of culture and imperialism that is involved in a great many of the world's literacy development projects. In fact, I would hazard the explanation that the reason for the failure of most of the literacy programmes that have been put forward in the last twenty years, particularly some of the early ones, but they are still failing, is the lack of this understanding. That imparting literacy to others involves ideological contests over meaning and power and is not simply a neutral giving to people the basics for them to do what they want with. But we can pursue that later.

For the moment, using the models and the conceptual tools I have just set out, I want to pick out three areas in which, particularly for my own discipline - anthropology - there has been, I think, some interesting work that can be transferred to literacy. I want to look at the notion of personhood and identity and how this is closely bound up with the nature of literacy practices. I want to look at relations of gender and literacy, gendered literacy practices - there has not been that much reference to gender at the conference - and I want to just clarify the notion of multiple literacies.

I want to dwell for the moment on personhood, partly as an example of the kind of thing that these models get you into, not only for its own sake, although I think it is a key area. But I want to start rather away from literacy which I think is one of the advantages that ethnographers have brought to the field. Sometimes, it is useful if you want to understand literacy to look somewhere else, not to start with literacy itself, because you have already got assumptions about what is going on, particularly if you are inside a programme. So I am going to start with some work by a man called Kirkpatrick who worked in Micronesia as an anthropologist on the concept of personhood, which at first sight might seem quite a long way away from both the title of this conference and of this paper, which was after all sociocultural dimensions of literacy in industrialized societies. Firstly, I want to signal that the industrialized and non-industrialized is not always the most fruitful dichotomy. If you want to understand literacy practices, there may be all kinds of bridges between these areas. So here is some literature from different societies that I think will help us understand the nature of literacy in our own society.

Kirkpatrick starts by saying "What do people in this culture that I am studying take the notion of personhood to be?" Well, firstly, he wants to start by making explicit his own notion of personhood so that we are clear, whether he is imposing a culturally specific one. He says he wants to take personhood as a field that is ideologically structured in any society - it sounds quite jargony at first, so what does he mean? By this he does not mean that the person as a person is determined by top-down institutions, the old-fashioned idea of ideology that says we are all indoctrinated, he does not mean that. But, that personhood is "a site of articulation" of dominant and subordinate ideological components. There is a struggle over the appropriate definition of the person, there is not a single totalizing concept of the individual such as we often work with in western society. Instead, there are a range of different ways in which a person is identified in Micronesian society. In the research literature, the person is being viewed as a basic term organizing morality. It is being seen as an important means for cultural formulation and production of self-awareness. It is seen as a model of and for action. Geertz, a well-known anthropologist in the USA, talks about the multifunctionality of the person, whereas in western societies the idea of the person is linked to a single persistent whole individual. In Micronesia there are varied

meanings. I can name just one example which makes the link with literacy. A man called Niko Besnier working in a small Pacific Atoll called Nukulaelae, discovered - as I was finding in Iran - that there were different literacies in different contexts there. One was associated with sermon giving and one was associated with writing letters. From the point of view of the notion of personhood, what was interesting was, that they involved different notions of being a person. In sermons you use the writing of the sermon as a backup to your giving the sermon orally. In the sermon, you are allowed to be hortatory, expressive, demanding, telling people what is going on. There was a particular person associated with this kind of writing. In writing letters, it was almost the opposite. The person who writes the letter, the model of person involved in the letter, is a person who is vulnerable, who is full of affect and emotional relationship. "I am distressed at your departure from the island to New Guinea to work. My heart bleeds until you return. I am saddened, vulnerable. I am nothing until you come back". A whole representation of personhood that interestingly enough was inappropriate to the oral discourse. When you are speaking to people in Nikulaelae, you are not supposed to express that kind of affective, but you can in the written dimension. This, incidentally, is another interesting contradiction to our normal assumptions where people say literacy is about detachment, and oral speeches embedded in persons. We have examples all over the world like the Nukulaelae one, where literacy practices embed huge amounts of affect, personhood in that sense of personhood as putting yourself on the line. So my argument would be when you get involved in a particular set of literacy practices you are taking on board with them the concepts of personhood associated with that particular set of practices.

An example from nearer to home also would bring up the gender issue, which is my second point. Kate Rockhill worked with Hispanic women in California, mostly migrant groups. She discovered firstly that there were quite clear gender distinctions around the models of literacy people held. The men would be described by both the women and the men as literate. When she did her ethnography, she found a slightly different picture. The men were mainly going out getting jobs in factories and such like - the first generation immigrants. Their main communicative practice was of an oral kind, having to learn to speak English to manage in the factory. They were not using that much literacy. The women on the other hand were mediating the forces of the State - the schools, the welfare, the social services. They were mediating all the literacy practices of these institutions to the family. This is a classic role, another of these disguised roles that women perform that are often not recognized as being a role. The school was sending home literature. I get piles of it all the time. My kids come home with piles of notes from the school. Social welfare is always sending letters. There are always demands from this institution and that. The women were mediating those and yet what they were doing was not even recognized as literacy, let alone getting any kind of status. It was marginalized just as their domestic labour was marginalized. So the first level was to recognize different gendered models of literacy. But there is more to it then just the status quo - there is a dynamic element. Women involved here were not satisfied with that domestic role, they wanted to get out of it. And interestingly enough they saw the way as through literacy. So they had a further model of literacy, not domestic literacy now, or gendered domestic literacy, but they saw literacy as associated with, as Rockhill puts in the title of her article, being SOMEBODY - with big capital letters. At first this may seem just a caricature of being somebody in the sense of the media's representation of the woman secretary.

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She usually has these air-hostess bow-tie things on that they all have to wear these days, and suits and the little briefcase, often that belonging to the man, who is the boss. This is part of a woman-of-the-world ideal that is a bit of a caricature, but after seeing the film *Pretty Woman* I decided I was justified in pursuing that caricature. It would be very patronizing for the researcher and for me to say - poor women being sucked into the American dream and the capitalist model. They are fighting like hell to get this role through the literacy they associate with it. They think that by going to evening classes and learning proper literacy, they will get those sorts of jobs. And the men are beating them up to stop them doing it. So we cannot sit here and say, how sad they have been taken in by the dominant model - they are victims. On the contrary, they are fighting the victim role. They are resisting the fact that they are getting physically attacked by the men, and this happens all over the world, of course. Men are continually beating women up because women are trying to get hold of some new literacy. It tells us something about the power involved in ideas about literacy. So these women are resisting the model of literacy which they are being identified with - domestic or marginalized, invisible literacy - and trying to generate new literacy and through it new jobs and new personhood. And that is my point around the relationship between personhood and literacy. In acquiring the new literacy they see that as directly associated with being a new person.

Some research in Canada by Jenny Horsman around some literacy campaigns there suggests that literacy workers can get bogged down sometimes in which model they are using. Some women at home were being approached by outreach literacy programmes to get involved in learning literacy. And because they were at home doing domestic work and it was hard to get out, the programme organizers said, right, we will take the literacy programme to the home. But what Jenny says about that is, the women are being reinscribed in domestic literacy. It looked as if it was a good thing, offering welfare literacy. What it did in fact was reinscribe them in the position and the person, the personhood, associated with the literacy they are trying to break out of.

So there is no obvious and given starting point for these campaigns. As Mary Hamilton said the other day about research, do we know what we are doing? A lot of the time I think we do not. I think that having a notion of what model of literacy is involved, how it is associated with a person, with an identity and how it is gendered, might help us to understand better what is going on. And just briefly one more word about the gender issue. The literature that I have managed to cull so far on the issues of gender and literacy, which is surprisingly small, has mostly been in the traditional, positivist statistical mould. It has been around access. You look at the world figures. UNESCO statistics on literacy and gender. They are about the disproportion of women and men who are literate. Now, there may be some use in that, although from what I have been saying it is quite apparent that the statistics are not really very much help. Given that all the people I have been talking about so far in Iranian villages, these women in the southern US, the women in Canada and people on Nukulaelae would all count as illiterate in those statistics. So they are not being even counted as significant, their literacy practices do not figure. So the idea of using those statistics in order to develop a policy about women and literacy is already problematic. Instead, we might look at what literacy practices are involved in, in a particular situation and how they are gendered. This involves not just looking at "women and literacy". One of the problems in the theoretical literature is that women

are seen around the world as a single category, with the same characteristics. Rather like thinking of literacy around the world as though it means the same thing everywhere. And that denies the cultural construction of gender that varies from one culture to another, just as the cultural construction of literacy varies from one culture to another. And both the construction of gender and the construction of literacy are imbued with power contests, they are sites of struggle. So I would prefer to look at the field of gender and literacy rather than the field of women's access to literacy, although that is clearly a component, but only a component, not the central focus. There is a certain amount of research now coming out of a qualitative kind, of which Rockhill's is some of the best, I think, around the notion of gendered literacy practices and personhood. I think you can see here that you have quite a different research programme and quite a different policy and teaching programme if you start from this position rather than from some of the others.

I will just say one more quick word before I finish on the notion of multiple literacies. Because I think it has been a powerful concept, but I am beginning to see problems emerging with it.

We use the concept of multiple literacies in order to contest the idea of a single autonomous literacy. I think that is ideologically and theoretically right. It is helpful. But then, when we start getting into what these multiple literacies are, we get a bit bogged down. Someone said at this conference, where do we end, do we just go on and on seeing different "literacies" in every use of reading and writing? It seems to me that there are at least three different meanings that people attribute to the notion of multiple literacies. The first is the obvious one around languages. Different languages are associated with different writing systems and literacies. There is some excellent research by Mukul Saksena in the UK who has been looking at Punjabi migrants in Southall who have three different languages, Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu and three different writing systems, Gurmukhi, Devanagari and Arabic Persian. What is interesting there, is that you can use any of the writing systems for any of the languages. He looks ethnographically at the choices that are being made around the breakfast table in Punjabi homes around what the children should be learning. Which languages and literacies are appropriate? And he suggests, for instance, that if you are oriented towards a nationalist notion of the Punjab as a number of Sikhs are, then you would want your children to be learning Punjabi using Gurmukhi script. If you are oriented towards Hindu nationalism in India, you would want Hindi written in Devanagari. On the other hand, he says there are pockets of socialist Punjabis who are not Sikhs and do not want the Punjabi state to be associated with the religious identity of either Sikhs, Hindus or Moslems, but instead want a secular Punjabi state. They want their children to learn Punjabi and Gurmukhi for quite a different reason than the Sikhs. Now that just begins to unpick some of the complexity around language variation and literacy variation. This, I think, is the major research area or one of the major research areas in the future. Multiple literacies and multiple languages. There is some excellent work by a woman called Nancy Hornberger at the University of Pennsylvania on models of bi-literacy - one of the first attempts to theorize what it means to have not just two or three different languages but two or three different literacies. In this sense literacy seems to mean writing systems.

But there are other meanings to multiple literacies. One is to distinguish dominant literacy from vernacular. The young adolescents described by Camnitta and Shuman in Philadelphia have suitcases under their beds full of literacy documents cut from

newspapers, things they have written, songs they have heard and written down, drafts of rap songs. Around that is focused a huge amount of their teenage identity and personhood. This literacy is quite different from the one the school is trying to impose on them: again we have this discipline issue. In school, you get a blank page from some of these kids who are then labelled illiterate. But a researcher follows them home having noticed they were passing notes under the table and writing graffiti and discovers they are living in a very powerful literacy world. It is a very different literacy world. So we need the concept of multiple literacies to address literacy variation within as well as between language communities.

There is a third meaning of multiple literacy which has been used at this conference two or three times. This is the use of the metaphor of literacy, taking it from literacy as reading and writing and applying it to things like computer literacy, political literacy. It goes across a whole range of contemporary social practices. I would argue that what it signals, what it means in this sense of "literacies", is the old autonomous model of literacy, which means civilized competence if you like. Somebody who is politically illiterate is somebody who does not understand the nature of politics. So the carryover of that word metaphorically in that context reproduces the idea of the literate/illiterate divide and of those on the literate side being in the light and those on the illiterate side being in the dark. I find problems with the metaphorical extension of the concept of literacy to these other domains, because it carries with it the assumptions of the autonomous model.

I was asked by Paul Bélanger to conclude with a couple of policy issues that follow from these concepts and from my understanding of current research.

The first follows directly from what I have just been saying: we need to clarify the concept of literacy itself and the terms and labels associated with it. You cannot change the world, as Freire says, if you do not understand it. At least you may change it in ways you do not mean to. We should, I think, and this is just my personal opinion, drop the word "illiteracy" totally. I would come in here and take down those posters that say we have to "eradicate illiteracy". We should probably dispense with the word problem as it is associated with literacy. I am also very suspicious of the word "basics" as it has been used in my own country. The "back to basics movement" actually involves a notion of the disciplinary uses of education to maintain social control. It may look as if it is a nice neutral term about the fact that you have to learn to read and write first and then can do things with it. But it is not. In fact, the context it is being used in, is a strong, powerful, ideological, disciplinary one. But I would also reject the idea of basic anyway as being that you start with the decoding, the reading and the writing and after that you do other things. There is no after that, you are already doing things. The ways in which you learn, the social interaction with teachers, the context, are already ideologically loaded. So there are no basics. There are just uneven and different literacy developments. So I would drop some of that language. I would still be very wary even of words like competencies which are creeping in because I think they are very often reductive as they bring literacy back to a level of skills. I am not denying that there are contexts where it is useful, but I would want to be wary about it. I would also be wary of skills. And I would want to build on some of the phrases I have been hearing in the last few days. Hanna Fingeret was talking about "working on literacy skills" - that is like a positive bit of action. Supporting communities in developing their own literacy agendas. The role of literacy in equity, local democracy, social justice. The idea of

the "role of literacy" seems quite different from simply literacy/illiteracy, or taking literacy to people, etc. So I think the change in discourse is significant, although on its own it does not achieve all the things we would like.

Secondly, we need more research about what we are up to. That is obvious coming from a researcher, but it does raise the question of who does the research, and if we are going to talk about democratic models of literacy or literacy for democratic purposes, we have to pull that into the research process too. This requires involvement of practitioners and students themselves in the research process: a huge agenda that I can only signal here.

And thirdly, can I make one prediction? The dominant model in the development world of the way in which development is operating is in terms of convergence - the world is all becoming similar. That model generates teaching methods and literacy programmes which assume that everybody has to have a single literacy which needs to be like that of the "Developed" World. My model for the future of the world is the opposite. I think the world is getting more complex and diverse and the ways in which we interpret what appear to be the same data, the same television programmes, the same computer technologies, the same mass media, are actually very diverse. It's a very plural and complex world - no single, uniform "Global Village". The only way we will understand that is, of course, if we can clarify concepts and do some research to find out how diverse and complex it is. The policy implications of my model of the future of literacy are that we will actually need a diversity of literacy programmes, not single mass programmes. A diversity of literacy research methods and diversity of teaching methods makes a much harder job. So far from feeling we have just arrived from somewhere, it seems to me we are now just departing.

Appendix

Australia

Since 1986

- Finalisation of a national policy "Australia's Language: the Australian Language and Literacy Policy". This policy, while embracing much about second languages and Aboriginal languages, is of more mainstream concern with its target of adequate literacy for all Australians, in English, by the year 2000.

- The major achievements, in addition to greater policy clarity, have been considerable expansion of provision and a significant increase in specific purpose provision. The latter includes workplace literacy, the Newstart arrangements for unemployed youth, a closer integration of literacy and language strategies, and a closer link between literacy and overall education and training provision.

- Literacy skills have achieved increased recognition through profiling worker competencies, the detailing of literacy competencies in industrial awards and award restructuring.

- The public prominence of literacy issues during ILY has encouraged the State governments to be more systematic in their approaches to adult literacy provision, especially in curriculum and teacher-related matters.

- A range of key research institutes has emerged, some with relatively narrow or focused charters, but all national in scope.

- In terms of international cooperation, Australian policy-makers, researchers, and literacy teachers appear to be in reasonably close contact with international efforts and trends, especially in the English-speaking developed world.

- Many publications, newsletters, journals and research reports are available, e.g. *Open Letter: An Australian Literacy Research and Practice* and *CATALPA Bulletin.*

Future Agenda

- More policy attention, research, programme development and provision are required. In particular in the following: appropriate assessment and reporting; further highly-specific and refined work on competency rating scales: curriculum development, effective programmes at the workplace, school strategies in relation to adult literacy strategies; and greater commitment to demanding side objectives, not least the social and cultural dimensions of access, equity and justice. With significantly increased government funding now committed, a greater interest in evaluation and programme effectiveness can also be expected.

- All Australian residents should develop and maintain a level of spoken and written English which is appropriate for a range of contexts, with the support of education and training programmes addressing their diverse learning needs.

- The learning of languages other than English must be substantially expanded and improved to enhance educational outcomes and communication within both the Australian and international community.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages should be maintained and developed where they are still transmitted. Other languages should be assisted in an appropriate way, for example through recording. These activities should only occur where the speakers so desire and in consultation with the community, for the benefits of the descendants of their speakers and for the nation's heritage.

- Language services provided through interpreting and translating, print and electronic media and libraries should be expanded and improved.

- There is an urgent need for a coordinated national approach to documentation, especially for teaching materials and curricula.

- The emerging networks for practitioners (CATALPA) and researchers are either very new or still being planned. They should fill a major gap felt by professionals, as will their publications and newsletters. International networking appears to be somewhat ad hoc, and more systematic approaches can be justified.

Austria

Since 1986

- Research

  - Investigation of Functional Literacy in Austria, conducted mainly among population groups where functional illiteracy is especially high, according to previous experiences.
  - Study on reading in Austria, conducted by the University Institute for Communication, which observed reading habits over some years.
  - Research project on the efficiency of different methods on how to promote reading ability according to the curriculum of Austrian Secondary and Grammar Schools. Target group: children of 12 years old. First reports have been published in German, a summary in English will follow.

- Conferences and Seminars

  - International Seminar on Functional Illiteracy in the Industrialized countries, in Ottenstein (30.5.-3.6.89).
  - "Learning to Read - Learning to Write" from November 4-7, 1990, in Bregenz. Scientific Conference on the occasion of ILY.

- Regional workshop on: "Research Methods in the Field of Reading" from November 12-13 1991 in Vienna. Experts from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Slovenia, Croatia and Austria participated. The workshop focused on the different approaches of various testing methods, on the possibilities of cooperation between the countries, and on attaining comparability of research results internationally.

- Other smaller seminars also took place.

- Promotional Work

  - Campaign of the Austrian Association of Newspaper Publishers to promote the public awareness of reading since November 1991.

- Literacy courses

  - Literacy courses provided for adults, conducted in a few Volkshochschulen (adult education classes) in Vienna.
  - Courses for long-term unemployed young people.

- Training courses for teachers

  - Since the ILY, an intensive programme has been provided for teachers of all types of schools. The training includes new methods to achieve accuracy in perception, speed of reading, concentration, logical thinking and proficiency in languages.

- Reading and Writing Workshops for Children

  - Since the school-year 1989/90, Reading and Writing workshops for children have been installed as an experimental form of teaching. The goal is to promote and train pupils at the age of 10-14 in written communication, in the creative use of language and in habitual reading.

Future Agenda

- Continuation of the reading campaign of the Austrian Association of Newspaper Publishers.

- Continuation and extension of the courses and training programmes.

- Planning of short workshops in the different states within the framework of teacher training, and in-service training for teachers.

- Continuation of the reading promotion projects for children and young people, such as "Reading in the park" and "Literature for young readers", organized by the International Institute for Children's Literature and Reading Research.

- A special seminar on reading needs and reading requirements in the labour market, organized by the International Institute for Children's Literature and Reading Research, together with the OECD, will take place in spring 1992.

- When revising the curricula for elementary and secondary schools as well as for teacher training, the importance of reading will be emphasized.

- An exhibition of reading material for the disabled, especially for children and young people, will take place in spring 1992.

Belgium (French-speaking) - Lire et Ecrire

Since 1986

- Lire et Ecrire was created in 1983 in the French-speaking Belgian community in order to eradicate social exclusion.
  After 1986 a new orientation was decided, so as to promote cooperation in literacy activities at local, regional and national level.

- An educational commission creates educational material for trainers and learners.

- In 1989 a French committee was created for the International Literacy Year, in order to examine the different aspects of illiteracy and make a report on the situation in the French-speaking community.

Future Agenda

- Activities facilitating the access of adults to the Primary Education Certificate (Certificat d'Etudes Primaires) will be developed.

- Training in enterprises will be expanded.

Canada

Since 1986

- In the 1986 speech from the Throne, the federal government made an explicit commitment to improving the literacy skills of Canadians, the first time a federal government in Canada did so. This commitment signalled two hallmarks of the federal government's involvement in adult literacy: it intended to work cooperatively with all sectors in advancing literacy, and it focused in particular on the economic implications of literacy for Canadians.

- In 1987 Southam News released the results of a literacy survey of Canadian adults, which was based on the performance of a sample of 2,000 adults on a test

of "everyday tasks". The notion that 24% of Canadian adults had some difficulty with ordinary reading and writing tasks was startling to the ordinary Canadian.

- In 1988 the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy released a report which estimated the direct and indirect economic costs to Canada of low literacy - over and above the social and personal costs, which have traditionally been cited. The federal government continued to demonstrate strong interest in the issue, particularly in the linkages between literacy and Canada's competitiveness and productivity.

  On International Literacy Day in 1988 the Prime Minister formalized this commitment by launching a national literacy strategy under the auspices of the Federal Department of the Secretary of State and established the National Literacy Programme.

- Statistics Canada conducted a landmark survey of 9,500 adult Canadians between 16 and 69 years of age (the Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities, LSUDA). The survey instrument directly measured people's reading, writing and numeracy skills. The results were released in 1990 and showed that overall 38% of Canadians were found to have some measure of difficulty dealing with the reading demands they encounter in their everyday lives.

- The relationships between employee literacy and business were the subject of a survey and report by the Conference Board of Canada released in 1990.

- The launch of the ABC Canada Foundation on International Literacy Day 1990 represented a major step in bringing focus to the involvement of the private sector in literacy efforts in Canada. The Foundation, in conjunction with the Canadian Advertising Foundation, undertook a highly successful public awareness campaign directed to young children and their parents, and has expanded its field of involvement to include remedial as well as preventive initiatives.

- Other major projects are currently underway or soon to be released.

- International Cooperation: Canada is extensively involved, through a large number of organizations, in bilateral, regional and international activities to support efforts in the development of adult literacy.

Future Agenda

- Access to programmes for learners will be improved, effective learning materials developed, and programme initiatives to meet learners' specific needs extended, while Canadians will be kept aware of the scope of the problem.

- One of the key issues for the next five years will be strengthening information networks so that people working in the area of literacy in various parts of the country have access to information on the innovative work being done by all partners, at all levels.

- There is a need to begin to look more critically at what works - what produces results.

- A better understanding of the literacy needs and motivations of particular disadvantaged groups in our society will be further developed: e.g. seniors, aboriginal people, people with disabilities, people whose first language is neither English nor French, and youth. Policy and programming will continue to be successful only if they deal with learners' situational realities and needs first.

- Research will continue to play an important role in the efforts to better understand illiteracy.

Chile

Since 1986

- Programmes oriented to functional illiterates have developed among other things knowledge about basic aspects of health, agriculture, production, etc.

- The government has promoted since 1990 an Improvement Programme for Adult Education financed with national economic resources. The programme includes literacy for adults followed by a period of post-literacy. This programme is oriented both to absolute illiterates and to people who have low schooling with difficulties in reading and writing.

- Chile is participating in a Regional Research (Latin America) that is being coordinated and promoted by UNESCO/OREALC and which aims to determine the main characteristics of the functional illiterates in the country. This study can provide valuable data for the design of educational strategies directed to functional literates.

Future Agenda

- Adult primary education will be strengthened, especially the programmes related to work training so as to reinforce the link between education and work.

- When the results of the regional research are released, it is expected that major modifications will be implemented in primary and secondary education.

- One of the problems that Chile will have to face in the short term is the work training of young people. Some topics related to this domain are being studied and prepared at present.

CIS

Since 1986

- Until now there has been no research on functional literacy in the CIS. However, research work in this field is gaining top priority.

- There are four main circumstances determining the necessity of new approaches to the issue of literacy:

  - general and universal complication of social life,
  - new content of basic socio-economic and political processes and new characters of their interaction,
  - widening spectrum of types of activities,
  - rapid obsolescence of previous skills, decrease of periods of their functional use.

- A research project "Functional Literacy in Changing Society, the Experience of CIS" has been proposed by the Research Institute of Continuing Adult Education of the CIS Academy of Educational Sciences. A pilot study has already been conducted.

Future Agenda

- Very important work should be done in order to sensitize public opinion to all the social, economic and political aspects of the issue of Adult Literacy.

Cyprus

Since 1986

- The number of adult literacy programmes tripled in 1990/91 compared to previous years.

- The problem has gained increased recognition.

- The budget for adult literacy courses has been increased..

Future Agenda

- Research:

  - The number of functional illiterates in Cyprus needs to be identified.
  - Programmes for functional illiterates have to be assessed and further developed.

- Policy:

    - Legislation concerning literacy and the workplace should be introduced.
    - Interdepartmental Committees will be set up in the Ministry of Education.

Czechoslovakia
Slovak Republic

Since 1986

- During the International Literacy Year several articles appeared in journals to propagate the fight against total illiteracy. But this was felt a distant problem because due to compulsory education in Czechoslovakia, complete illiteracy was considered to be very small. Official data are, however, not available.

- In 1991 a research team was established in Slovakia at the Institute of Experimental Pedagogy, Slovak Academy of Sciences, to investigate functional illiteracy. A research project - First Aid Project - has been designed. A survey is going to be made in order to detect the groups at risk and then to approach decision makers, different institutions, trade unions, press etc.

- The results of this research will lead to a proposal for appropriate measures for compulsory education as well as for the adult literacy programmes within adult training and re-training to minimize or prevent the occurrence of functional literacy.

- International cooperation has started with the help of UIE.

Future Agenda

- Research:

    - The research project on functional illiteracy will continue. The results will be available by the end of 1992.

- Action:

    - As soon as the research findings are available, they will serve to raise awareness of decision makers, different institutions, educators, etc., on the importance of this issue.
    - The Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Confederation of Trade Union Associations of the Slovak Republic have been contacted and appropriate provisions to organize literacy programmes will be designed in collaboration with them.

- Network:

  - Contacts will be intensified with the Prague Institute for Educational and Psychological Research, which is in charge of the Czech national research on functional illiteracy.
  - Research cooperation is expected with the Institute of Educational Research in Bratislava involved in the IEA reading literacy study.
  - International contacts will be expanded.

Finland

Since 1986

- The problem of adult literacy has been recognized. There is public and political awareness mainly on the basis of a survey conducted in the whole country, which showed that comprehensive school students have not acquired the comprehension strategies essentially needed in Finnish society: shortages occurred especially in interpretive and evaluative comprehension.

- The recognition of the problem of functional literacy has not led to surveys on adult literacy. Nevertheless, a research has been conducted on the subject of reading habits among adults by the Research Centre for Modern Culture of the University of Jyväskylä.

- The main issue concerning adult literacy in Finland during recent years has been the deeper understanding of the notion of literacy. Very important issues have been second language literacy and computer literacy.

Future Agenda

- A programme for second language learners is needed. There are not enough qualified trainers or adequate material for the programme.

- A survey focusing on adult literacy as well as a survey on the most common reasons for illiteracy are needed.

- The analysis of the level of expected literacy would be essential in order to plan the programme for adults and to start networking on national and international levels.

France

Since 1986

- Public opinion has become aware of the problem.

- Research has been developed in order to be more aware of the situation.

- Actions in different fields have been conducted concerning different spheres of the population (social, cultural, educational, for children, adults, prisoners, army etc.)

- National coordination of public authorities and NGOs has been introduced.

- A network of persons responsible for the different programmes has been developed.

Future Agenda

- Greater sensitization for the subject is needed.

- New educational programmes should be proposed.

- Communication between decision makers, target populations, children etc., needs to be developed.

- Efforts to promote research and funding will continue, also with new partners.

- The network will be further developed.

- The circulation of information through the media should be improved.

Germany

Since 1986

- A first report on ILY was produced by the Federal Government.

- In October 1990 recommendations were made by the Parliament for measures against illiteracy.

- Various publications on illiteracy have appeared, but no accurate study on the magnitude and nature of illiteracy.

- The number of participants in literacy programmes rose from 5,700 (1985) to 20,000 (1991).

- The number of institutions offering literacy programmes grew from 280 (1985) to 400 (1991).

- Several major projects have been conducted on elementary qualifications, personal and social competencies, media in basic adult education, language experience approach, etc.

Future Agenda

- Research should be carried out on:

  - individual learning strategies (migrants etc.)
  - infrastructure of adult education
  - causes of illiteracy
  - participants and motivations
  - magnitude and dimension of functional illiteracy
  - research methodology (relevance and effects of research, relationship between quantitative and qualitative research, etc.)

- Policy/Action should:

  - create full-time posts for tutors
  - support the new federal states to initiate literacy activities
  - provide classes for specific target groups (eg. migrants)

Hungary

Since 1986

- The changing economic situation has led to increased unemployment and inability to enter re-training among low-educated people.

- There is no public awareness regarding functional literacy.

- Research has only been conducted on reading underdevelopment among youth people.

- A change has been noted in the evening schools at basic level: teenagers have replaced adults.

Future Agenda

- A survey on functional illiteracy should be conducted.

- A research group for analyzing problems of illiteracy will be established.

- Experimental courses should be developed for improvement of learning skills and abilities among low-educated adults.

- International contacts will be strengthened.

- Special training is needed for trainers giving literacy courses.

- Books and articles on functional illiteracy may be published.

- A national conference is envisaged on the experience of functional illiteracy.

Ireland

Since 1986

- There has been a steady increase in the Adult Literacy and Community Education budget. A special priority has been given to funding adult literacy work through this budget since 1990.

- Recommendations to increase literacy provision nationally in the Programme for Social and Economic Progress (PESP) were agreed by the Government and social partners in 1991.

- The Department of Education has established a Consultative Group on Adult Education and Training. Participants in this group include representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), statutory bodies, Trade Unions and Government Departments.

- An extensive information and publicity campaign was launched in 1990 by the National Adult Literacy Agency to raise public awareness and improve the quality of the service.

- There has been a significant increase in the number of local literacy schemes and literacy provision in other institutional settings.

- The number of students getting help has risen.

- A movement has grown towards a more permanent literacy service with the increased number of key personnel receiving some payment, e.g. Literacy Organisers, Tutor Trainers and Group Tutors.

- The Policy Document "Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work" was revised by the National Adult Literacy Agency.

- A special allocation of IR£20,000 was made under the Programme for Social and Economic Progress (PESP) to co-ordinate and implement National and Regional Tutor Training programmes.

- Patrick J. Hillery, President of Ireland, agreed to act as patron of the work of the National Adult Literacy Agency in 1990 - International Literacy Year. In 1991 his successor, President Mary Robinson, also agreed to act as patron of the Agency's work.

- The Department of Education has established a research project to evaluate the effectiveness of literacy programmes and improve the quality of present provision.

Future Agenda

- Campaigning will continue to improve public and political awareness of the literacy problem - through an Annual National Awareness Week.

- The role of community-based adult literacy schemes as key providers will be strengthened.

- Routes of learning for adult literacy students have to be coordinated, with the option of accreditation.

- Tutor development should establish minimum standards for training programmes for literacy tutors as well as the development of a form of Irish-based tutor accreditation.

- Practical approaches to measuring student progress and the effectiveness of the literacy service need to be developed. These must be appropriate to the service principles underlying good adult literacy work.

- Links between literacy provision and other adult education and training opportunities will be improved.

- Research is needed into how students can learn more effectively and use their learning in their lives.

- International cooperation will continue with UNESCO and the International Council for Adult Education, and with European partners.

Korea

Since 1986

- There has been no national census on literacy since 1970. In order to examine the actual extent of adult illiteracy, a sample survey based on functional literacy was conducted in 1990. Among a sample of 2,116 people of 13 years of age, 5.8% were found to be completely illiterate.

- In 1987 the Social Education Promotion Law (Adult Education Act) was the first legislation on adult education and functional literacy. The fundamental purpose of the act was the provision of adult education. An advisory committee on adult and social education to the Minister of Education was established in order to review the effectiveness of government-supported adult education programmes in general.

- Another group of adult educators has made several noteworthy recommendations. It recommended that adult education be extended through grade twelve and that more emphasis be placed on women's education between fifteen and fifty years of age, both in rural and in urban areas. The group recognized that adult education programmes were too scattered and had very little unity, and suggested the creation of a national resource centre for adult education.

- There have been cooperative efforts between libraries and adult education programmes in recent years, as well as between the media and adult education programmes.

Future Agenda

- There is a need for new pluralistic, community-based initiatives with the objective of serving the most disadvantaged.
- Collaboration between business, labor and schools is needed, so as to successfully solve the problem of adult literacy.

- New government measures are needed to enhance literacy: among others, revision of the Social Adult Education Promotion Law of 1987, so as to build a stronger intellectual base for adult literacy.

- Financial support is required by the National Institute for Adult Literacy from the Ministry of Education.

- Adequate tests to measure literacy should be developed.

Poland

Since 1986

- In 1988 a special curriculum for adult basic schools was introduced.

- The ongoing historical changes in Poland, the reform in education and its management, the democratization of the society and the appearance of new associations in every field of human activity are important for the identification of the problem of functional literacy and for the formulation of suitable actions.

- The law on education adopted in 1991 confirms the right of every citizen to education and the right to complete their general education but, without further elaboration, delegates to the Ministers of Education and Labor the formulation of principles of adult education and its implementation. On the policy level, the key indicators for 1992 exclude any improvement of the situation in education, aiming to complete by January 1992 the complete decentralization of school management to local authorities.

- In spite of the growing number of new associations, the role of NGOs in the field of adult education is very limited.

- A research consultation project has been proposed and submitted to the attention of the Polish government. Its aim is to identify the actual dimension of the problem and to raise awareness of the society.

Future Agenda

- In order to gain interest and positive attitudes, functional illiteracy has to be shown against the new tasks and challenges faced by an individual in the society. These arguments have to be well justified and self-explanatory when presented to the public opinion and policy-makers.

- Research priorities should reflect the scale of interests and priorities broadly accepted in terms of target areas, existing interrelations, economic implications, etc. Interdisciplinarity of the research should be assured through mixed research teams and evaluation techniques.

- Lack of networking experiences and traditions might jeopardize their establishment and operation. Nevertheless, the penetration of European and international networks in Poland might be of great help for the purpose, especially through the involvement of NGOs, research institutes, local initiatives, etc.

Romania

Since 1986

- Education has been subject to major reform.

- Efforts have been made to launch research on Functional Literacy.

- Research objectives in 1991 are:

  - design of a research project
  - training of the research team
  - examination of the linguistic and socio-psychological aspects of functional literacy.

Future Agenda

- Measurement instruments should be improved by adapting statistical methods coming from the Canadian experience, in order to carry out an empirical study on literacy abilities used in daily activities in Romania.

- Statistical data will be gathered, by investigation of the target population by the end of 1992.

- It is intended that accurate information will be gathered concerning the levels of reading, writing and numeracy among the considered population.
- An experimental programme of functional literacy is to be tested on a sample of adult population (16-25 years old) in the rural areas.

- Contacts will be intensified with interested parties.

- Public interest on this problem will be raised through articles and publications.

Spain

Since 1986

- Research on Functional Literacy:

    - Quantitative research has been completed in Catalonia and the Canary islands. (The questionnaires require the informants to apply their skills to everyday life.) Quantitative methods are designed by the research team and applied by professional agencies.
    - Qualitative research has been carried out in the Canary islands. (Life histories, discussion groups, systematic observation and in-depth interviews.) Qualitative methods are designed and applied by the research team with educational competencies.

    The definitive results of both studies are expected in June 1992.

- Adult education laws in Andalucia and Catalonia:

    - Educational reform has resulted in a new law with attention to adult education.

Future Agenda

- The present research is to be continued.

- A network will be coordinated.

- Diverse institutions will strengthen their collaboration (department of labour and local governments).

- Diverse methods and materials will be elaborated to improve the learning process.

Sweden

Since 1986

- Main surveys and publications on the recognition of adult illiteracy:
  - A large scale project/survey of attitudes and obstacles for learning is under development.
  - A Study on Bi-lingualism has been carried out by Ake Viberg, at the Linguistic Department of the University of Stockholm.
- Public and political awareness:
  - 10 years' experience of increasing political awareness have been gained through Swedish Educational Broadcasting.
  - Active recruitment activities have been conducted among workers, trade unions, etc.
- Significant developments since 1986:
  - The new Education Act 1991 guarantees all adults education corresponding to nine years of formal schooling (an entitlement for the adults and an obligation for the municipalities).
- Main trends in the development of provision (adult literacy programmes):
  - Curriculum development has been carried out for the nine years schooling of the Adult Basic Education system.
- Research centres have been established:
  - Centre for Adult Educators, University of Linköping,
  - Adult Education Research Group, University of Göteborg, Department of Education,
  - IEA, Reading Literacy, University of Stockholm, Department of International Education.

Future Agenda

- A new challenge faces popular adult education.

U.K.

Since 1986

- There has been consistent interest in the issues of illiteracy and related basic skills. Major research findings have been published through the media. Interest

is particularly high due to the effects of ILY, surveys undertaken by ALBSU and RaPaL and the new legislation currently before Parliament.

- New legislation before Parliament, The Further and Higher Education Bill 1991, contains elements that will guarantee funding for adult basic skills work.

- Small studies on literacy and numeracy needs have been made, within different age groups.

- Nationally recognized student accreditation has been developed.

- Training opportunities for staff have increased.

- Open Learning centres are being developed (1988-92).

Future Agenda

- The quality of provision available to students is to be improved, and the number of students entering programmes increased.

- Increased provision should be made for second language literacy.

- The relationship between student drop-out and provision should be investigated.

- The social view of literacy should be explored by documenting with learners the contexts in which they use literacy in day-to-day life and the many cultures of literacy that exist in local communities.

- Systematic research is needed into in-practice opportunities available to practitioners and to learners, with direct feedback into Adult Basic Education.

- Learners' perspectives should be enabled to emerge in research findings: developing a "listening" kind of research.

U.S.A.

Since 1986

- Many exciting, innovative and important new literacy projects have been conducted, in a number of contexts, including communities, families and workplaces.

- Increased respect for students' culture, background, skills and aspirations has been incorporated into instruction.

- A new leadership has emerged among professionals, volunteers and literacy students.

- More diverse research methods and questions have been applied.

- More attention has been given to minority language populations.

- There is increased understanding of the importance of adult learner involvement in all aspects of policy, instruction and programme management.
- Public and private funding has increased.

- There are increased opportunities for university study in literacy.

- New federal legislation has been enacted, and increased attention has been given to literacy in many state and local governments.

Future Agenda

- Central policy should shift from "How many?" to "How does change happen?"

- Action research, through which we reflect upon and make explicit our learning over the past years, should be conducted.

- Literacy programmes, community development work, and other efforts that are oriented to positive social change, need to be brought together.

- Stable jobs in literacy education have to be developed.

- Reflection is needed on the concepts of leadership that are embedded in present literacy work, and development of new concepts that emphasize collective action.

- Training and support should be provided for participatory research.

- Additional attention should be focused on minority language populations.

- Improvements are needed in graduate education in adult literacy, and in the relationships between practitioners and university graduate students and faculty.

- Adult learners should be involved more consistently.

- A more comprehensive social policy should be developed that recognizes the relationship between literacy and issues such as racism, sexism and class discrimination.

- The funding base of NGOs has to be stabilised, and funding sources developed.

- International cooperation and communication among literacy workers and learners should be increased.

EC

Since 1986

- A meeting was held in Brussels in May 1990, at which 17 projects concerning literacy from 12 member states, were presented and supported.

- Programmes such as Petra II, Tempus, Force and Skills have been developed.

Future Agenda

- The EC will in future continue to support and finance projects aimed at combating illiteracy in Western and Eastern Europe.

- Further efforts are necessary from the Community as far as the integration of Eastern European countries are concerned in the following fields:
  - contact with new media and technologies
  - contact with specific materials
  - use of teaching materials.

- Greater support and assistance must be given to illiterate people in the Member States and in Eastern Europe.

- The Commission will support the following planned activities aimed at combating illiteracy:

  - The organization of a European summer school on problems relating to literacy and adult basic education. The Commission has already agreed to provide some funding and other organizations have been approached.
  - The development of a European pilot tutor training course, building on work already carried out by a network.
  - The organization of seminars on specific themes.
  - The organization of meetings for students at European level.
  - The organization of exchanges and study trips for researchers, trainers, tutors and students.
  - The organization of an "exhibition train" for literacy in Europe.
  - The development of research projects at European level.
  - The carrying out of surveys at European level on: available research; tutor training; key resource people; terminology; bibliographies, etc.

UNESCO (Industrialized countries)

Since 1986

- In 1986 a Conference was held at UIE on literacy issues in the industrialized countries.

- In 1991, thanks to the enormous mobilization by a whole range of social partners and the impetus given by the International Literacy Year, there is a great progress in the field of literacy. A much greater variety of funding is now available for research or educational programmes in many European countries, but not necessarily on a durable basis.

- Many more countries have developed public information with a high degree of sensitivity to individual learner needs and aspirations, but still the numbers of adults with basic skill needs who obtain some form of training are a very small percentage of those who might actually have reading, writing or numeracy difficulties.

Future Agenda

- All countries may not be able to afford to wait for major research on the extent and types of need. On the other hand, some types of participatory/action research may be essential to ensure that provision matches learner and/or social aspirations.

- A distinction should be made between the difficulty in implementing good practice in unpropitious teaching/learning conditions and identifying effective learning strategies.

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